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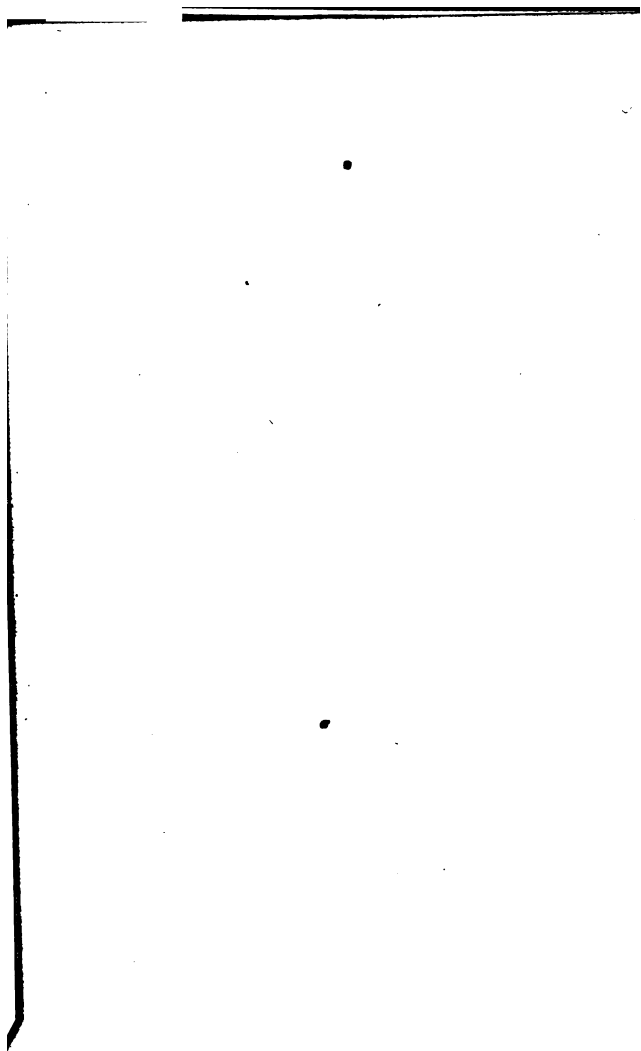
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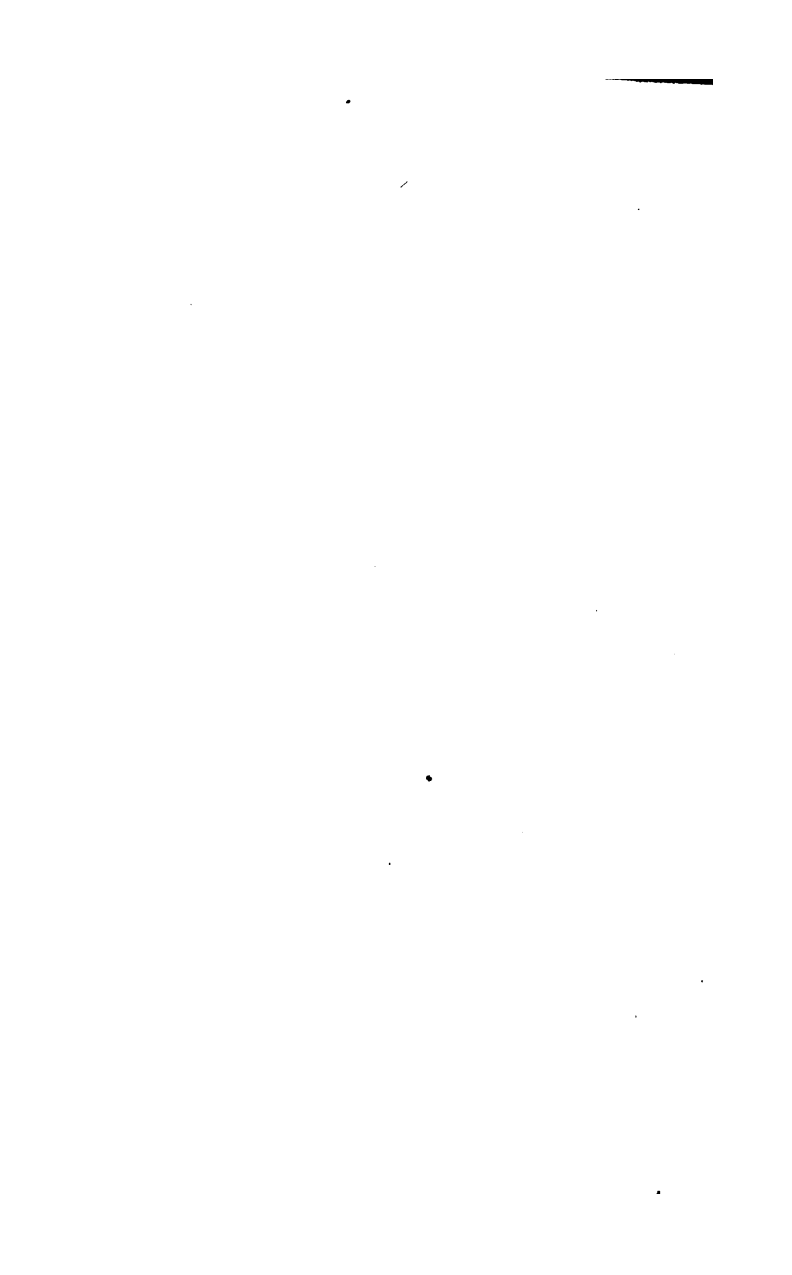
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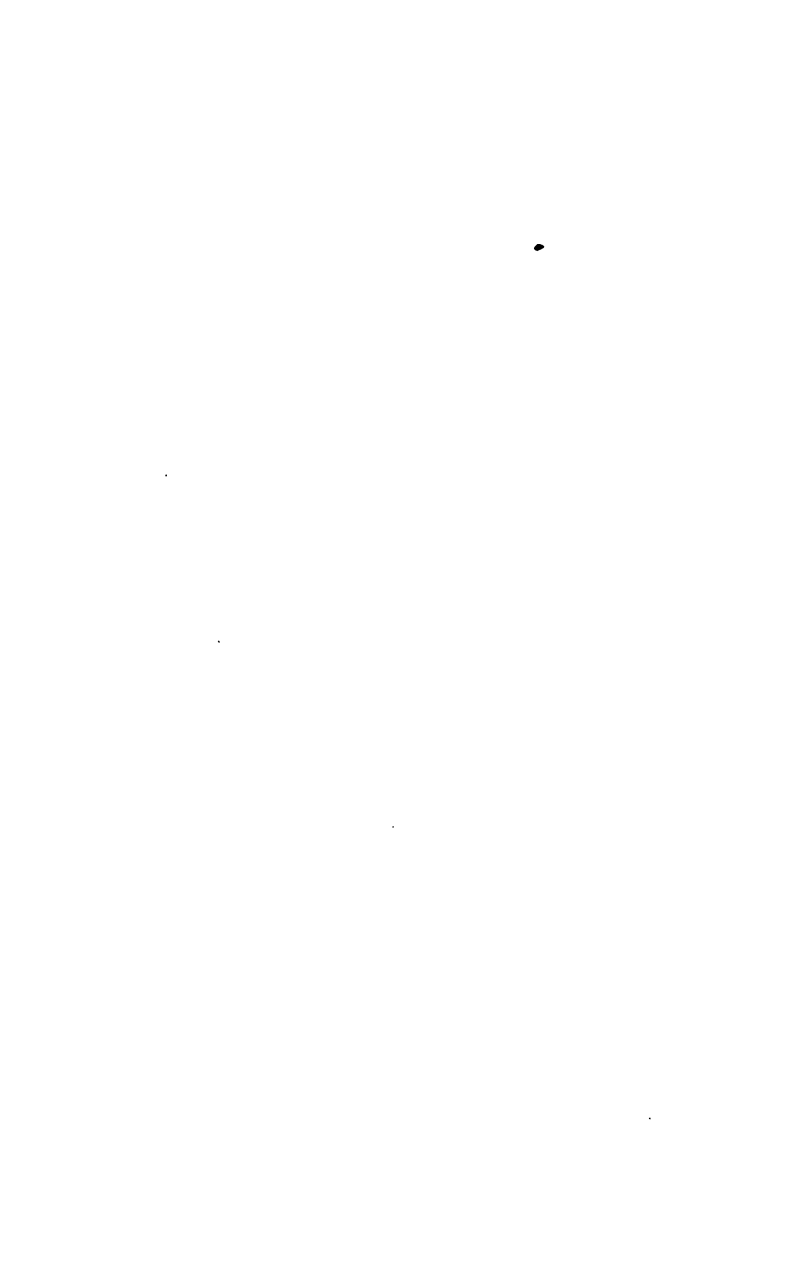
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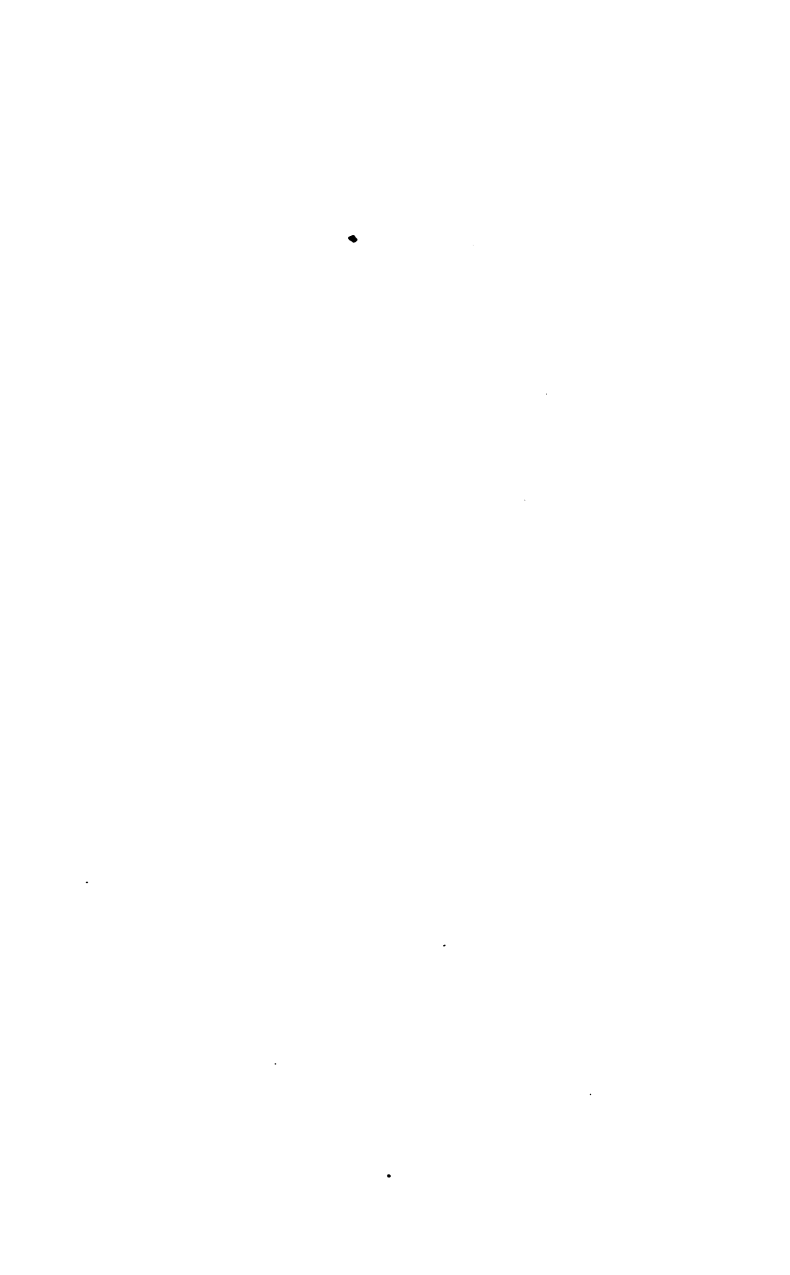












A
S K E T C H
OF THE
LIVES AND WRITINGS
OF
DANTE AND PETRARCH.



J. W. Langham 1814.

S K E T C H
O F T H E
LIVES AND WRITINGS
O F
DANTE AND PETRARCH.
WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF
ITALIAN AND LATIN LITERATURE
IN THE
FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

Possum nonnunquam ad illum *Dantem* & *Petrarcham* aliosque vestros compluscule, libenter & cupidè comessatum ire nam neque me tam ipsæ Athenæ Atticæ cum illo suo pellucido Ilisso, nec illa vetus Roma suâ Tiberis ripâ retinere valuerunt, quin sæpe Arnum vestrum, & Fæfulanos illos colles invisere amem.

MILTONI Epistol. Epist. viii.

B. Bommathæo Florentino.

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A
S K E T C H
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THE revival of letters^a, and the progress of genius and manners, have ever been dear to the lovers of literature; and when every concomitant circumstance is minutely traced by

^a It is not intended here to treat of those physical causes which are supposed to have some influence on the progress of arts and literature. The curious reader is referred to the 13th section of the Abbé Du Bos' *Reflections on Poetry and Painting*; let us only intro-

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duce

by the historian and antiquary, we are apt to contemplate with pleasure the struggles of expiring barbarity, and the rise of elegance and polite learning. That Italy should be the country which first shewed the symptoms of an anxious desire to throw off the shackles of ignorance, and break the bonds of barbarism, is not the least surprising, since (to use the words of a learned historian), even in the darkest periods of monastic ignorance, she had always maintained a greater degree of refinement and knowledge than any other European country. In the beginning of the fourteenth century, and at the end of the sixteenth, refinement seemed to exert herself with some degree

duce a remark which he makes on the influence of climates: " Si Jules II. et Leon X. avoient regné en
 " Suede croit-on que leur munificence eût formé dans
 " les climats Hiperborées, des Raphaels, des Bombes,
 " & des Machiavels ? Tous les Pays font-ils propres à
 " produire de grands Poëtes et de grands Peintures ?"

of

of power; and more particularly in forming, under Leo the Xth., a body of men, who for abilities, learning, and accomplishments, might vie with those of the Augustan age. The great patronage extended to men of learning by a prince, who, to the deeper studies of the scholar, added the polite and refined manners of the courtier, could not fail to draw into being the poet, philosopher, and painter. But as the first dawn of the morning is often surveyed with as much pleasure as the sun in his meridian brightness, the editor will therefore attempt to trace the early productions of Italian poetry, and excuse himself from proceeding farther; since that subject is likely soon to receive ample illustration from one of the first critics of the age. It has been remarked that Europe may perhaps behold ages of a bad taste, but will never again relapse into barbarism:—the sole invention of printing has forbidden

that event ^b. In the fifteenth century, this art, whose first materials were rough, and execution clumsy, was the means of multiplying manuscripts, and circulating more freely the remaining relics of knowledge. Yet many years before literature received this very valuable acquisition, and any other method of communicating information was conceived, than that of laboriously copying old and imperfect manuscripts, flourished Dante ^c, the Ennius,

^b The first book which was printed in Italy was in Italian: it was printed at Venice, by Nicolas Janfon, in 8vo, 233 pages. At the beginning is this note—*Questa e un' opera la quale si chiama Decor puellarum: cioe honore de le donzelle: la quale dà regola, forma, e modo al stato de le Honeste Donzelle.* At the end—*Anno a Christi Incarnatione. 1461, per Magistrum Nicolaum Jenfon, hoc opus, quod Puellarum Decor dicitur, feliciter impressum est. Laus Deo.*

^c He was born in the year 1265, at Florence, of the families of the *ghieri*, and *De Bella*, whose connections we are but slightly acquainted with.

and

and father of Italian poetry. After seven hundred years of ignorance and darkness, when learning, immured in the cloister, and circumscribed to narrow limits, was uselessly employed in metaphysical disquisitions, this meteor of genius, as it were, blazed out with redoubled lustre.—Poetry, with her sister arts, was as yet in a state of weakness and childhood; rude and uncultivated in her appearance, rough and untutored in her manners, she gained but little polish and refinement from Cicello D'Alcama^d, Lucius Drusse de Pifa^e, or from the regal hands of Frederic II.^f, who, captivated and allured by the charms of literature,

^d He composed verses about the end of the 12th century—the first Sicilian poet.

^e He lived in the year 1170, and is cited by Giambullari.

^f Trifflino, Allacci, and Crescimbeni, have published some of this prince's love-verses, which are written in the Sicilian dialect.

cultivated in Sicily a taste for poetry.—To Dante alone was it given to shew to an unenlightened nation the bold and vigorous flights of a fervid imagination. The vivacity of his temper, and the quickness of his genius, were strong recommendations to the famous Brunetto Latini ‡, who, as tutor in the belles lettres, paid particular attention to his pupil.

The

‡ Villani acquaints us that Brunetto Latini, Dante's master, was the first who attempted to polish the Florentines, by improving their taste and style, which he did by writing his grand work, the Tesoro, in Provençal—he died in 1294. Fu un grande filosofho (to use the words of his biographer), et fu un summo maestro in rettorica, tanto in ben saper dire, quanto in ben dittare: et fu dittatore del nostro commune; egli fu cominciatore e maestro in digrossare i Fiorentini, et fargli scorti in bene parlare, et in sapere, giudicare, e reggere nostra republica seconda la politica.—El fu quelli chaspose la rettorica di Tullio, et fece il buono ed utile libro, detto Tesoro et Tesorato, & la Chiave del Tesoro, & piu altri libri in filosofia, et quelli dei vizj

et

The great learning and extensive erudition
of Brunetto were of infinite service in adding
strength

et della virtu.---La Chiave del Tesoro, is a work, I believe, not very well known. In the year 1257, the Rhetoric of Tully was translated into Italian by Galiotto Guidotti: it was first printed in the year 1478, with this title---“ *Rettorica nova di M. Tullio Cicerone, traslatata di Latino in volgare per lo enimio maestro Galiotto da Bologna.*” The reasons why Brunetto chose to write his Tesoro in French, will be better known by making use of his own words:---1st, *Parceque nous sommes in France.* 2d, *Parceque la parlure est plus delitable, & plus commune a tous langaifes.*---In the library of the Marquis Ricardi at Florence, is a manuscript Chronicle of Venice, from the foundation till the year 1275, written in French by Maitre Martinda da Canale, who in his introduction says, as a reason for using that language, *Parceque la langue Françoisse cort parmi le monde est la plus delitable á lire et á oir que nulle autre.* Besides these, who cultivated the Provençal language in preference to the Italian, a Maitre Guillaume, a Dominican of Florence, having written a book on the virtues and vices, translated it into French in the year 1279, at

strength and firmness to the flighty genius of Dante; and from such an instructor it may be supposed that, with a considerable share of critical knowledge, he conceived the idea of rendering to his country the most essential service in his power, that of purifying and enriching its language. A taste for poetry was easily imbibed from Guido Cavalcanti^b, an intimate friend, and contemporary writer. These early seeds were fostered and nourished by the writings of Guido Guinicelliⁱ, the
great

the desire of Philip the Hardy. Fontanini is mistaken when he affirms that the Italians wrote in French, in preference to their own language; it was the Provençal, at that time the most fashionable, whose idioms are different from the French.

^b He died in the beginning of the 14th century:—his poems have been published in a Collection of the Old Italian Poets, printed at Florence, 1527, 8vo, very scarce and curious.

ⁱ This poet, whose verses are to be met with in the old collections,

great favourite of Dante, who in his *Purgatory* has honoured him with the title of Father. If we may judge from his work, "*De Vulgari Eloquentia*," it appears that he was acquainted with most of the first Italian poets, and by smoothing the uncouth phraseology of these early writers, modulated the language, and gave to it a clear and easy flow. We will here mention two Italian poets of whom Dante has not taken the least notice, through ignorance.—He has (says a very learned and acute critic ^k) mentioned only those who, for their coarse and inharmonious style, deserved reprehension—all these I will omit, as indifferent versifiers, and only take notice of a Flo-

collections, flourished about the middle of the thirteenth century.

^k The improved edition of the *History of Italian Literature*, by Tiraboschi, will amply supply the editor with many interesting anecdotes in the course of this Essay.

rentine,

rentine, whose name and existence are hardly known. Dante de Majano was the poet with whom Dante Alighieri was totally unacquainted: to him we must add Nina of Sicily, the first female poet among the Italians¹, between whom and Dante de Majano a singular amour subsisted; since, without a personal acquaintance, and without once seeing one another, they continually sent verses expressive of love and regard, which are preserved in the collec-

¹ It has been remarked by an ingenious writer, that the first poets have either copied the verses of women, or have been instructed by them—"La Grece qui se vante de neuf Poetes Lyriques, se vante de neuf Dames excellentes en ce genre de Poésie, et Pindare le Prince de ces neuf fameux Poetes fut le disciple de Myrtis, l'une de ces dames, et n'eut point de honte d'être repris de Corinné, qui en étoit une autre, n'y d'être vaincu cinq fois solennellement par elle. Les Grecques nous assuèrent qu'ils ne tiennent leur éloquence que de leur mere, & Hortensius nous persuadera qu'il laisse sa fille heritiere de la sienne.

Oeuvres de Sarasin, p. 224.

tion

tion made by Giunti. Nina wished to be called the Nina of Dante; and Dante was proud of circulating verses, which his chimerical affection had dictated in honour of his Sicilian mistress. Dante D'Alighieri having now sufficiently cultivated his taste for poetry, turned his thoughts to deeper and more severe studies: for this purpose he went to Bologna and Padua^m, from whose universities he gained a stock of the most useful and instructive information. Poetry was not the only study of Dante, nor was he so much captivated and allured by her charms, as to forget the duties

^m It is from Benvenuto D'Imola that we learn this, as his biographers have not mentioned it; and from Francis Buti (a writer almost contemporary with Dante, whose profession was to comment on his works, and to interpret them in the university of Pisa and Bologna, during the 14th century), we are told that Dante took the habit of the Fratrum Minorum, an ecclesiastical order, but left it before he had taken the oaths.

of a faithful citizen. His country was as dear to him as his muse; and he filled, with equal honour, the different characters of the poet, the statesman, and the soldierⁿ. In the year 1289, warped by the prejudice of party, and borne along by the prevailing faction of the Guelfes, he took an active part in the battle against the inhabitants of Arezzo, and the second year after against those of Pisa. So much was he concerned in the affairs of government, that he was sent twice as ambassador to Charles II. king of Naples; the first time to invite that prince in 1295 to Florence, where he had been chosen protector of the state; the second, to obtain from the same prince the pardon of Vanno Barduci, in whose cause the Florentines strenuously exerted themselves. Philèphes has preserved the speeches of Dante on

ⁿ Æschylus, whose genius was as bold and vigorous, was a poet and a soldier.

that

that occasion; and the sentence, as repealed by Charles II°. In the year 1300, Dante was chosen prior, or supreme officer of Florence. This office, it has been supposed, was the source of all his misfortunes, banishment, and disgrace. The Neri †, or blacks, as they were called, being assembled in the church of the

• Dante étant un des Gouverneurs de la Republique de Florence, avoit si bonne opinion de sa personne, qu'il croioit qu'on ne pouvoit rien faire de bien sans lui, c'est pourquoi quand il s'agissoit d'une ambassadade, il auroit voulu pouvoir la faire, & demeurer en meme tems a Florence, il disoit, " Si io vo, chi sta? si io sto, chi va?" si j'y vais, qui sera ici? si je reste, qui ira?

Menagiana, tom. iv. p. 221.

† The Florentines were at that time all Guelfes: Pistoia, a town in the duchy of Tuscany, was distracted with the factions of the Panciatichi, and Cancellieri; the chiefs of Florence were sent to check these seditions, but their interposition rather increased than stopped their proceedings---the nobles were roused, and the Guelfes separated into two parties, called the Neri and Bianchi.

bleffed

bleſſed Trinity, were conſulting how they might introduce Charles of Valois into Florence : Dante, who was at that time prior, wiſhed rather to be a mediator in the conteſt, than a principal, and refuſed to give his ſentiments on either ſide. The Bianchi, or whites, ſuppoſing that they were meditating the deſtruction of their party, were inſtantly in arms : the Neri caught the alarm ; and a conteſt would have enſued, had not Dante given his advice that the chiefs of both parties ſhould be baniſhed. Whiſt Dante was ſent as ambaffador to Boniface VIII^d, to conſult him concerning

† Boniface in this negotiation ſhewed himſelf rather partial to the Neri, and Charles of Valois ; for which Dante has placed him, in his Inferno, among the Simonifts.—*Les Peintres avec le pinceau font des fatires auffi bien que les poetes ; et ſans emprunter le ſecours de la voix, ils pouſſent des ſanglantes inveſtives contre leurs ennemis. En faut-il d'autre temoin que la vengeance que tira Michel Ange de*

ing some method of pacifying Florence, Charles arrived, routed the Bianchi, and restored the Neri. The victorious party imme-

ce maitre des ceremonies Messer Biagio, qu'il plaça en enfer dans son jugement universel. On peut ajouter a ce tour celui d' Annibal Carrache, qui pour se moquer de la sotte vanité de son Frere, le fit ressouvenir de la bassesse de sa naissance, en lui envoyant une petite esquisse ou il avoit représenté, sa mere que cousoit un habit, et le bon homme son pere, qui enfiloit une aiguille avec des lunettes. *Carpenteriana*, p. 142.—Mr. Walpole speaking of the resentful temper of Frederic Zuccherò (a painter in the reign of Queen Elizabeth), says that " while he was employed by Gregory XIII. to paint the Pauline chapel in the Vatican, he fell out with some of his Holiness's officers; to be revenged, he painted their portraits with ears of asses, and exposed the picture publicly over the gate of St. Luke's church, on the festival of that Saint, the patron of painters.—Verrio, quarrelling with Mrs. Marriot, the housekeeper at Windsor, drew her picture for one of the furies—this was to gratify his own passion. To flatter that of the court, he represented Lord Shaftesbury among the dæmons of faction in St. George's hall.—*Anecdotes of Painting*, vol. i. 4to edit. p. 140.

diately

diately banished Dante from Florence for two years, fined him 8000 livres, and, on default of payment, confiscated his goods. However severe this sentence may appear, their fury nevertheless did not abate. Cante di Gabrielli, in 1302, was commissioned to examine into the conduct of those who were banished, and to condemn them as traitors, robbers, and extortioners. Dante, with his companions in exile, was condemned to be burnt alive^r, should he ever fall into the hands of his enraged persecutors. Such was the fury and malice which animated the citizens, in those times of discord and dissention; and such the severe judgment against a man, who, rather than stain himself with the blood of his neighbour, en-

^r This circumstance has escaped all those who have ever written concerning Dante. Sr. Savioli of Bologna was the first who discovered this inhuman decree; the original of which he found in the archives of Florence in the year 1770.

deavoured

deavoured to soften the rigours of civil war, and establish the firm foundation of a general and lasting peace. After all these cruel, and, we may venture to say, unmerited persecutions, can it be supposed that Dante would tacitly submit to poverty and banishment? After having fruitlessly endeavoured to obtain pardon by the most tender and affectionate letters, in 1304 he collected into an army all those who had been banished from Pistoia and Bologna, and marched to Florence. All their attempts to enter the city were frustrated: the citizens, accustomed to arms, repulsed the besiegers, who by this unfortunate attack lost for ever all hopes of being restored to their country. Dante, chagrined at his disappointment, and overcome with despair, fled to Verona, and buried all his cares in the family of Alboin, at that time governor of the city, and elder

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brother

brother of the great Can^o. His misfortunes, his good offices to the state, and last, not least, his great and extraordinary abilities, failed not to ensure him a friendly and generous reception. The gaiety and buffoonery of a court had but few charms for the serious and austere temper of Dante. A rude and severe remark, which personally insulted his protector, was the occasion (as Petrarch informs us) of his leaving Verona so abruptly, and taking refuge in the families of the Marquis Morello Marefpina, and Bosofi.—Whilst his talents and mis-

• So liberal was this prince towards men of genius, however poor and unfortunate, that a gallery in his palace was always open for the reception of illustrious, but indigent men. Every one had an apartment sufficiently furnished; a table, not richly, but plentifully, stored; and a servant in waiting: over the doors of every room were emblematical devices and pictures expressing their miseries and misfortunes. It was this prince whom Petrarch styled “The refuge and asylum of the indigent.”

fortunes

fortunes procured him friends and protectors, he still had some hopes of returning to Florence; and for this purpose wrote to Henry the Seventh, who was preparing to enter Italy, and examine into the conduct of the Guelfes. In the year 1311 Dante offered his services to Henry, animated him with the desire of besieging Florence, and, as if he were certain of success, indulged himself with the most flattering hopes. Too confident in the powers of his master, little did he expect a repulse. Henry, indolent and inexperienced, only wasted his time under the very walls of Florence, in idle and useless preparations; and his death, which happened soon after, was a blow as fatal to the aspiring hopes of Dante, as it was unexpected. After this unfortunate event, Dante turned himself wholly to literature, and the muses. He travelled from Padua into France,

and passed some time at Paris^t, where the brilliancy of his imagination, the depth of his learning, and unbounded talents, shone with unusual lustre. In this university he is said to have publicly supported many theological disputations, with great force of argument, and sound judgment. On his return to Italy, Gui Novello de Polenta, governor of Ravenna, invited him to his palace; and so strong was his esteem for his unfortunate guest, that he not only conferred on him the highest honours, but sent him publicly as his ambassador to Venice, to conclude a treaty of peace between Ravenna and that city. The Venetians behaved with arrogance, no submissions were re-

^t Both Boccacio and Dante studied at Paris, where they much improved their taste by reading the songs of Thiebault king of Navarre, Gaces Brules, Chatelain de Coucy, and other ancient French Fabulists.

History of English Poetry, vol. i. p. 463.

ceived.

ceived, and no treaty concluded. Dante, chagrined and discontented, returned to Ravenna, and shortly after (through vexation, as it is supposed) died at the palace of his friend, on the 14th of September, in the year 1321, and the fifty-sixth of his age^u. His funeral, which was superb and magnificent, was attended by all the nobles of Ravenna; and the prince himself, as the last duty at the grave of his friend, pronounced an eulogium over him. The Venetians, however they had secretly wished for

^u His strength of mind was not the least impaired even in his last moments; and he is said to have composed his own epitaph just before he expired, in Latin Leonine hexameters, which I will subjoin :

Jura Monarchiæ, Superos, Phlegetonta, Lacusque
 Lustrando cecini, voluerunt fata quousque ;
 Sed quia pars cessit melioribus hospita castris
 Auctoremque suum petiit, felicior astris
 Hic claudor Danthes patriis extorris ab oris
 Quem genuit parvi Florentia mater amoris.

his death, when masters of Ravenna, erected a monument to his memory, which, in the year 1692, was rebuilt, and ornamented at the expence of Cardinal Dominic Cossi, at that time governor of Ravenna.—The Florentines, sensible of the merits of this illustrious man, were now ready to pay those honours to him when dead, which they had refused when living. Ambassadors were sent to Ravenna to beg the ashes of so excellent, but unfortunate a citizen; yet so great was the love for Dante at Ravenna, and so valuable did even his remains appear in the eyes of his protectors, that the solicitations of his countrymen were rejected^w. The ardor of the Florentines was

not

^w There seems indeed to be something in poetry that raises the possessors of that very singular talent far higher in the estimation of the world in general, than those who excel in any other of the refined arts; and accordingly we find that poets have been distinguished by antiquity.

not to be checked by this refusal; a statue of this great ornament of their state was carried in triumphal pomp to the church of St. John, and publicly crowned by the prior, amidst the acclamations of a grateful and generous people. Medals were cast in honour of his services and talents; and the name of Dante was every where mentioned with the highest applause and veneration.

Such was the political character of Dante, and such were the “many coloured” scenes of his life.—As a statesman we only see him hurried on by party prejudice, condemned to poverty and banishment—as a

antiquity with the most remarkable honours. Thus Homer was deified at Smyrna—as the citizens of Mitylene stamped the image of Sappho on their public coin. Anacreon received a solemn invitation to spend his days at Athens; and Hipparchus, the son of Pisistratus, fitted out a splendid vessel in order to transport him thither.

Fitzosborne's Letters, let. liii. p. 279.

poet, we look up to him with filial awe and reverence, as to the father of Italian poetry. With his excellences therefore, as a writer, let us close these remarks.

The rough and inharmonious verses of the oldest Sicilian poets*, the inventors of Italian

* The oldest Italian poetry (says the learned Mr. Warton) seems to be founded on that of Provence—several of Dante's fictions are derived from the same fountain. Dante has honoured some of the Troubadours with a seat in his Paradise; and in his tract "De Vulgari Eloquentia," he has mentioned Thiebault, king of Navarre, as a pattern for writing poetry. To this remark let us add that of the linguist Duret, who says that some are of opinion that it came from Sicily, some from Provence, but does not exactly determine whence it took its origin. "Pour la plus grande mollesse & effemination des Siciliens, on leur attribue la poesie par rythmes et cadences comme aussi ils ont este les premiers qui ont traite l'amour en langue vulgaire et en rythme, si on adjoust foy a Dante & a Petrarch, bien qu'il y en aye qui attribuent cecy a nos Gaulois. & aux Limosins,

lian poetry, were composed as early as the end of the twelfth century. Cicello D' Alcamà (as it has been before observed), Lucius Drusse del Pisa, and Folchacchieri del Siena, being the first who gave any idea of Italian verse. Frederic the Second, king of Sicily, and his two sons, Euzio king of Sardinia, and Mainfroy king of the two Sicilies, were all untutored votaries of the muse; but Euzio is said to have excelled both his father and brother in poetry.—About the middle of the thirteenth century flourished Guinicelli, and Ghislieri: the poems of the first are still to be found in the collections of ancient Italian poetry; but those of the latter, as well as those of Fabricci, are unfortunately lost.

Limosins, & Provençaux ceque je croy, sion a esgard a la derniere façon de rythmailler, & de donner nombre aux vers par une mesme fin. et desinence des voix sur la closture d'iceux, desquels le Dante a faict un livre, que j'ay veu escrit a la main.

From

From the poems of Cavalcanti⁷ (in which, besides the great and evident alteration in the language, a vein of philosophical morality is perceptible), Dante derived his taste for poetry; and, from the rude and early writers of Sicily, a stock of words, which, to his nice and musical ear, appeared barbarous and dissonant: the great end he therefore proposed to

⁷ His sonnet (if we may so call it) on the love of this world, is a master-piece, considering the times in which he wrote: it has been the subject of many long and learned commentaries—the ingenious and acute Gilles of Rome was the first commentator. In the edition (says Bayle) of Sienna, in 1602, some observations of Celso Cittadini are added. *Esposizione di Egidio Colonna sopra la Canzone di Amore di Guido Cavalcanti, &c. &c.* in Siena, 1602, in 8vo.—Dino del Garbo of Florence, an eminent philosopher, followed the example of Gilles. Fran. P. del. Rosso, James Mini, Plinius Tomacelli, and lastly, Jerom Frachetta, a philosopher of Ravigo, have commented on it.

Vid. Crescimbeni, *Hist. della Volg. Poet.*

himself,

himself, and indeed the greatest service to his country, was, to new mould and soften the asperities of his native language. Concerning the year in which the *Divine Comedy* * (as he

* The reason why Dante chose to give it the title of *Comedy*, has been a subject of dispute among the learned. The critics rather agree with Maffei and Tasso, who suppose that Dante in his style intended to exemplify three kinds of writing—the sublime, he called tragic—the middle, comic—and the third, elegiac: so that we must conclude that, by calling it *Comedy*, he supposed that the middle style was generally used throughout the poem. Perhaps the *Inferno* of Dante is the next composition to the *Iliad* in point of originality and sublimity; and, with regard to the pathetic, let this tale (speaking of Count Ugolino) stand a testimony of his abilities; for my own part, I truly believe it was never carried to a greater height.—*Essay on Pope*, Vol. i. p. 266.—Francis the First forbade the reading of the *Inferno* in France, because Dante had made Hugh Capet say—“*Figliuol fui d'un Beccaio di Parigi.*”—Canto XX. of the *Purgatory*.

See Pasquier's *Recherches de la France*, p. 452.

called

called it) first appeared, many and various have been the determinations. We are led to suppose that some detached parts were composed in the year 1300^a (a period in which he was engaged in civil war and bloodshed), rather before his banishment; and finished about the year 1311, at the time when, animated with the hopes of returning to his country, he applied to Henry the Seventh. Certain it is that Florence was the place in which he sketched out a rough draught of his poem; and the more finished parts were composed in his leisure and uninterrupted moments. Many are

^a It was when Italy was torn in pieces—when the little states were leagued against each other—in a word, in the heat of the struggle and bloodshed of the Guelph and Ghibeline parties, that Dante withdrew from his country, and made the strongest draught of men and their passions that stands in the record of modern poetry.

Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer, .p. 66.

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the retreats supposed to have been chosen by Dante, for finishing in peace and tranquillity the remainder of his poem. Udina, Verona, and Ravenna, dispute the honor of having been the seat of the muses: and in the monastery of Fonta Avellona the chamber is shewn in which Dante retired to compose his great and immortal work. The title of Divine has been given only to the works of Homer and Plato; but the judgment of the learned of all nations has given to the Comedy of Dante the same distinguished title. Though the author wished to be the model of the middle style, he has shewn how little government he had over his impetuous imagination^b. He is bold, majestic;

^b Although the author of the Essay on Pope has said that unexemplified criticism is always useless and absurd, yet I hope he will pardon me in not citing particular passages of this sublime writer; as I have lately heard,
and

jestic, and sublime; his vast and comprehensive mind, embracing at once things human and divine, soars as far "as angels ken." Master as he is of poetical beauties and ornaments, he has discovered a wonderful knowledge of philosophy, astronomy, theology, history, politics, and oratory. At times indeed (and what writer is not?) he is inferior to his subject: his images are strange and unnatural; his rhymes forced and inharmonious; his style harsh and unpolished; his stanzas dull and tedious. But, upon the whole, let us not forget that in his poem the exalted ideas of Homer are often clothed in rich and gorgeous trappings; that there is throughout a vigorous imagination, whose grand and sub-

and I hope with truth, that he is engaged in a History of Italian Literature, from Dante to Metastasio: a work in which I doubt not more taste, more learning, and more elegance will be displayed, than falls to the lot of ordinary abilities.

lime

lime conceptions few painters^c could express, and few poets imitate. The general esteem for the works of Dante was so great, that it almost rose to enthusiasm^d. Public lectures were instituted for elucidating and explaining particular passages of his poem, in imitation of

^c Michael Angelo Buonarotti, whose genius was something similar to that of Dante, had sketched with a pen, on the margin of his copy of the *Inferno*, every striking scene of the terrible, and pathetic; but this very valuable curiosity was unfortunately lost in a shipwreck. It would have been a singular pleasure to have compared the masterly sketches of the painter with the more finished scenes of the poet.

^d The Tuscans were smitten by the charms of poetry to a greater degree than any other nation, as soon as their language began to be turned towards verse. One of our old novelists (Franco Sacchetti, if I remember well) says that the common people of Florence used commonly to sing the poem of Dante about the streets, even during the life of that poet, whom we justly consider as our first writer of note.—An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy, by Baretti, vol. ii. p. 174.

those

those which had formerly been read on the *Annals of Ennius*. By a decree, on the 9th of August 1373, at Florence, Boccacio was appointed to the professorship; and on the third of October he began his lectures in the church of Saint Stephen. One of Boccacio's successors was Philip Villani^e.—Venice, Pisa, and Bologna

^e Philip Villani, or Villano, must not be confounded with his uncle John Villani, nor with his father Matthew Villani.—John has rendered himself famous by a *History of Florence* from its foundation to the year 1348, when the plague carried him off. This history, far from being a dry detail, is illustrated with occasional events of other nations; and, that he might make it as perfect as possible, he travelled through France and the Netherlands to collect information. Matthew, his brother, continued it till about the year 1363, when he fell a victim to the plague, which had returned with increasing violence. Philip, the son of Matthew, added forty-two chapters, and afterwards the lives of the illustrious men of Florence. The history is written in Italian, and the
lives.

Bologna, followed the example of the Florentines. Benvenuto D'Imola, who held his office six years, was chosen at Bologna; and, as lecturer, composed his Commentary, which he published at the desire of the Marquis Nicolas the Second, to whom he dedicated it.—The lecturer chosen by the Pisans was Francis Buti; by the Venetians, Gabriel Squaro of Verona; and by the university of Plaisance, Philip del Reggio.

A taste for Latin poetry was among the least of Dante's accomplishments; and happily was it for himself and his readers that he abandoned the idea he once entertained of writing his *Inferno* in Latin^f: I say happily; for although
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lives in Latin; but Philip, seeing the impropriety of using two languages, translated them into Italian, with little accuracy and faithfulness.

^f In his youth Dante had written his "*Vita Nuova*," or

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he has by his Eclogues convinced us that he was no despicable poet in that language, yet
has

the history of his amours with Beatrice, daughter of F. Portinari, a private gentleman of Florence; which contained many poems in praise of his mistress, who died young. From this Beatrice, whom he has placed in his Paradise, he receives all his spiritual lessons in theology. His Comedy has been translated into Latin by Riccardo, a Carmelite; and by Andreas, a Neapolitan, in the year 1400; and also by Paulo Nicoletto, a Venetian, in 1410. "Dante designed at first that his *Inferno*, and Treatise on Monarchy, should appear in Latin; but finding that he could not so effectually in that language impress his satirical strokes, or political maxims, on the laity, or illiterate, he altered his mind, and published those pieces in Italian. Had Petrarch written his *Africa*, his *Eclogues*, and his prose compositions, in Italian, the literature of his country would much sooner have arrived at Perfection." *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. p. 147.—With the greatest deference to the learned Mr. Warton, let us observe, that his *Treatise on Monarchy* was written in Latin, and first published by Simon Schardius, at Basil, 1566, with the title "*De Monarchia Mundi*;"

has he not acquired more honour to himself by enriching and polishing the language of his

Mundi;" which, after the death of Dante, was condemned as heretical. His other Latin works (on the authority of Fabricius) were some Epistles, preserved in La Galleria di Minerva at Venice; in one of which he styles himself a Florentine by birth, not manners;—*Libri duo di Vulgari Eloquentia*, published at Paris, 1575; afterwards at Vicenza, 1529; translated into Italian by an unknown hand, with a dialogue by John George Trissino. *Dante della Volgare Eloquenza, tradotto in Italiano, e publicato da Gio. Giorgio Trissino—in Vicenza per Tolomæo Gianicolo, 1529, fol.*; it was republished at Ferrara in 1583, 8vo.—Lastly, *Questio de Natura duorum Elementorum Aquæ et Terræ*, published by John Benedict Moncetto, at Venice, 1508.—Dante, poete Italien, a fait trois livres du Paradis, du Purgatoire, & de l'Enfer, qui sont une satire universelle, ou il drape tout le monde. Il avoit commence ces livres en Latin par ces vers,

"Pallida regna canam fluido contermina mundo;"
puis il changea d'avis, et les fit en Italien.

Patiniana, p. 87.

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country?

country? by daring to claim to himself a path unknown to his countrymen, and at that time unexplored? and, lastly, by shaking off the monotonous jingle of the Leonine couplet, and adding grace, harmony, and dignity to the rough and corrupted language of his Gothic ancestors? To Dante therefore, with the utmost esteem and veneration, is modern Italy to look up, as to one of her greatest ornaments—the author and father of her poetry—who, by his eminent and profound researches into every branch of science, blended the different accomplishments of the philosopher and poet, and shewed to the world how much the milder beauties of poetry might gain from the severe studies of abstracted sciences. Poetry, under the hands of Dante, is like a block of marble under the chisel of a Phidias or Praxiteles, which, by the masterly touches of the artist, is
soon

soon reduced to symmetry and grace^s.---So interesting are the lives and characters of men of

^s To those who are not disgusted with the personal peculiarities of illustrious men---and can listen to Montaigne, when he says that he is fond of white wine, without bluntly answering, like Mr. Du Puy, What the devil is it to me whether he is or not?---every minute account of Dante must be agreeable. He was, according to his biographers, of a becoming stature, but rather inclined to be fat and lusty; his air was manly and noble, and by his pensive look and continual silence assumed a kind of stern gravity; his face was long, his eyes large, and his nose aquiline; he had broad cheeks, a projecting under lip, dark complexion; a beard and hair long, black, and curling. To beguile his melancholy hours he would frequently amuse himself with drawing---an art in which he had great merit. In conversation he was commonly uninteresting, as he generally sat in a meditating posture, and only spoke to introduce some severe, and satirical remark. An insult he never forgot or forgave; but to his friends and protectors was ever grateful and generous. He was so attentive in reading, that Philippus Carolus, in his critique on Aulus Gellius,

of genius, and so anxious are we to learn the progressive motions of literature, that every circumstance

gives us a singular instance in this passage—*Dantem Florentinum ferunt ad spectacula ductum, apud bibliopolum, quod ex ejus taberna in forum prospectus esset, confedisse, librumque, cujus fuisset cupidus, invenisse: quem tam avidè attentèque legerit, ut domum rediens juramento testatus sit, nihil se vidisse, aut audiisse, ex iis quæ in foro dicta factaque essent.*—Giotto the Tuscan, the pupil of Cimabue, painted an exquisite portrait of Dante for the Hotel de Ville at Florence. In the cathedral at Florence is a painting of Dante, done by Andrea Orgagna: it was placed there by a decree of the senate; which decree declares that there shall be raised at the public expence, in the cathedral “*ed in luogo onorato, un marmoreo et artificiosamente sculto sepolchro, con quelle statue e segni che lo potessero rendere ornatissimo.*” The painting is in good preservation: it represents him walking in a meadow with a book in his hand: in the back-ground is a distant view of Florence. See a curious book published at Florence, 1783, intitled, “*Divini Poetæ Dantis Alighicrii sepulchrum a Card. Aloysio Valenti-Gonzago restitutum.*” All the ten first editions

cumstance relating to these two points, is generally the source of entertainment and instruction.

To the labours and indefatigable enquiries of the Abbé de Sade^b, we are principally indebted for the many entertaining particulars relating to Petrarch, whose extraordinary abilities, and unabating love for Laura, had gained him the approbation and applause of Europe.

editions of the *Divina Comedia* printed from 1472 to 1497, are extremely valuable and scarce; that of 1478, in which the text is printed in a neat character, and the commentary in black letter, contains the remarks of Guido da Terzago, and Jacopo dalla Lana, who are much esteemed as annotators, but very little known. A copy on parchment is preserved in the library of the Seminary at Padua: Consul Smith was in possession of another. The edition of 1716 is very valuable; that of 1731, printed at Lucca, is much esteemed for its explanatory notes; but the best and most superb edition is that printed at Venice in 1757, in 5 vols. 4to, ornamented with beautiful engravings.

^b *Memoires pour la Vie de François Petrarch.*

Francis Petrarch was born the 18th of July, at Arezzoⁱ, in the year 1304. His father, Peter, surnamed Petracco, of a good family, was a notary at Florence^k; but unfortunately engaging in the contest of the Neri and Bianchi, was banished the city by the victorious party, and in the year 1302 retired to Arezzo, where the Bianchi were settled. Electa Caningiani, the mother of Petrarch, having permission to return

ⁱ Of the house in which he was born, he says—*Anno igitur jubileo Romæ revertenti, atque Aretio transeundi, quidam nobiles, qui me comitatu suo dignum censuerunt, dum intra mœnia urbis adducerent, ignarum me per illum deduxerunt vicum, atque incio & admiranti domum illam ostenderunt in qua natus essem, haud sane amplam seu magnificam, sed qualis exulem decuisset.*

Epist. iii. Ber. Sen. lib. 13.

^k However low this occupation may appear, yet such was the esteem the Florentines had for Petracco, that they often employed him in the most important stations, and more than once sent him as ambassador to the neighbouring states, to negotiate peace.

to:

to her native city, carried with her her infant son, to an estate at Ancisa¹, and superintended his education till he was seven years old. At this period, when there remained but little hopes of her husband's returning to Florence, she quitted Ancisa, went to Pisa where her husband was, thence passed by sea to Marseilles, and lastly settled at Avignon, where the Holy See was established, and where Petracco afterwards engaged himself in the service of the Pope. At Avignon and Carpentras, Petrarch, with his younger brother Gerrard, applied himself to the study of polite literature^m; and as

¹ The family of Petrarch was originally of Ancisa, a large fortified town, at some distance from Florence, on the road to Arezzo.

^m The fame of Dante being universally established, and some fragments of the *Inferno* having accidentally fallen into his hands, he instantly applied himself to poetry, and determined to follow closely the steps of so great a master.

he had displayed in his early years a ready and quick apprehension, his father, biaſſed by the fordid hopes of a lucrative poſt, and determined to wean him from ſtudies ſo congenial to his diſpoſition, ſent him firſt to Montpelier, and thence to Bologna, for the purpoſe of ſtudying the law. To a mind ſo refined and elegant, the dry and uninterſting details of *Immerius* muſt naturally appear uſeleſs and unpleaſant. It was a ſtudy, ſays *Petrarch*, for which nature never intended me, and which, at the death of my father, I totally neglected. *Cicero*, *Virgil*, and *Ovid* had for him the moſt alluring charms; they were the companions of his leiſure moments, and by their aſſiſtance his natural propenſity to claſſical learning was conſiderably ſupported and increaſed. To theſe, his moſt favourite authors, was owing a coolneſs which ſubſiſted for ſome time between him and his father, who, from the miſtaken idea of his

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his misapplication of time, seized his little libraryⁿ, and burnt it before his face. This was
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ⁿ Cicero and Virgil, as he himself tells us, were saved. *Pater nam memini me tam mœstum contemplatus, subito duos libros, penè jam incendio adustos, eripuit; et Virgilium dextrâ tenens, lævâ Rhetoricam Ciceronis, utrumque flenti mihi subridens ipse porrexit: "Et habe tibi hunc (inquit) pro solatio quodam raro animi, hunc pro adminiculo civilis studii."*—His tam paucis, sed tamen magnis comitibus animum solatus, lachrymas pressi; deinde circa primos annos adolescentiæ, mei juris effectus, libris legalibus abdicatis, ad solita remeavi; cò ferventior, quo interrupta delectatio acrior redit.—Lib. xv. *Ber. Sen^m. Epist. 1.*—See an account of the loss of two very valuable manuscripts of Cicero, in which was his Treatise on Glory, in the Life of Petrarch, by the ingenious Mrs. Dobson.—Menage has given us an anecdote concerning the loss of Cicero's Treatise De Gloria, which I will transcribe, although it has been very satisfactorily contradicted by Bayle, under the article Alcyonius. *Le traité de la Gloire de Cicéron fut trouvé tout entier par Philèphe. Il regarda cette heureuse decouverte comme un moyen de se faire valoir dans le monde, & d'acquérir une*
grande

an insupportable blow to all his literary attainments; and so strongly did he express his sorrow, that his father, moved by his entreaties, permitted him, at proper intervals, to soften the severer studies of the law with the perusal of his favourite authors. In the year 1326, Petrarch, having heard of the death of his father, quitted Bologna, and arrived at Avignon, just time enough to pay his last duties to his dying mother. At that time Petrarch (now in his 22d year), together with his brother, entered

grande reputation. C'est pourquoi il songea d'abord a le faire paroître comme son propre ouvrage; mais craignant que ce mensonge ne fut découvert dans la suite des tems il fit un traité De Contemptu Mundi, qu'il ne composa que des lambaux du livre de Ciceron, qu'il attacha ensemble du mieux qu'il put: apres quoi il jetta au feu le traité De la Gloire; et fit perdre a la republique des lettres, par cette action odieuse, un ouvrage ou il est a presumer que Ciceron n'étoit pas moins admirable, ni moins eloquent que dans ses autres ouvrages.—Tom. iii. p. 163.

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into an ecclesiastical order, for the purpose of holding a benefice granted to them by the Pope. Petrarch^o, ever studious of his dress, and of personal elegance, only took the priest's tonsure, that he might the more indulge himself in

• “ In the form of Petrarch (says Jannot Manettus) there was a happy mixture of majesty and grace : he had so much agility and dexterity that no one could gain the mastery of him.” He was extremely well made, and had a very fair complexion ; his conversation was easy and pleasant ; he never disgusted by an ostentatious display of learning, and always gave his opinion with modesty and diffidence. In the expences of his table he was moderate, generally eating fruit, and drinking wine plentifully diluted with water ; and always dined and supped standing. Although temperate himself, he was particularly pleased if any one would call in at dinner-time. Four times in the week he fasted, and on Fridays generally dined on bread and water. He was unusually fearful of thunder and lightning—slept but shortly, and most commonly in his clothes. At midnight he arose to perform the stated services of his order, and afterwards returned to his favourite literary studies.

external

external ornaments. "Do you recollect," says he, in a letter to his brother, at that time a Carthusian, "Do you recollect how attentive we were to our dress—how much time we spent in ornamenting our persons—how anxious we were lest a blast of wind might derange our curls, and how careful not to discompose the plaits of our gowns?" By this attention to his person, and this vanity in dress, we may naturally conclude that he gave himself up more readily to love, and was only studious how he might appear more graceful and elegant in the eyes of a mistress. It was on the 6th of April, on the morning of Good-Friday, in the year 1327, that going to hear the matin-prayers in the church of St. Claire at Avignon, Petrarch for the first time saw the young and beautiful Laura, whose name, whose person, and accomplishments, have been rendered immortal by the most tender and exquisite verses which the imagination.

imagination of a lover could invent. Laura, who at the age only of thirteen had charms sufficient to captivate the heart of Petrarch, must have been by nature eminently beautiful, if we can believe the luxuriant descriptions of her lover. But it has been well observed that the warm colouring and expressive touches of the poet, must give way to the more correct design of the painter P, who has represented her

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• A small portable picture of Laura was painted by Simon de Sienna, an intimate friend of Petrarch. A copy of this picture is now preserved in the house of Sade at Avignon. Laura appears in it, dressed in red, holding a flower in her hand, with a sweet and modest countenance, rather inclining to tenderness. Under the portico of Notre Dame de Dons is a painting in Fresco much damaged by the weather, but sufficiently perfect to distinguish the figure of Laura dressed in green, at the feet of St. George on horseback, who delivers her from the dragon. In the church of St. Maria Novella at Florence, is an allegorical picture by the same artist,

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as of a fair and delicate complexion; her hair of a light colour; her face round, with a small forehead,

in which Laura, among the females who represented the pleasures of the world, is dressed in green, with a little flame rising from her breast, her gown embroidered with flowers. At Sienna is shewn a picture of the Virgin, which was intended for a portrait of Laura—in this also she has a green robe, and her eyes are fixed on the ground. An old picture of Laura was purchased in 1642, by Cardinal Barberini, which had been for some time preserved at Avignon. In the palace of Turin (says an entertaining traveller) are two original portraits—one of Petrarch, the other of his beloved Laura, by Brongino, a famous painter of that day. Her sort of beauty would never have captivated me, had I been Petrarch—first, her hair is red; her eyebrows extremely narrow, and exactly forming a flat arch; her eyes small; her nose a little hooked, and rising too high in the middle; her mouth not very small, and lips like two scarlet threads; a very faint colour in her cheeks; the contour of the face more square than oval; her countenance more demure than engaging; her head is covered with a kind of caul, which fits close, and is of gold net,

forehead, and cheeks rather full; her eyes much cast down, and almost closed—the whole countenance seems to express the modest simplicity of a young girl of a mild disposition and extreme bashfulness. The meek and reserved temper of Laura, was, in the eyes of Petrarch, a virtue worthy of esteem and veneration: but at the same time that he admired the endowments of her mind, he was not blind to the beauties of

net, with pearls of precious stones fastened on in lozenges: this caul confines her hair, excepting a border or roll, which is left all round close to her face. Her gown, which I imagine was intended to imitate embroidery of that day, looks now like a piece of an old Turkey carpet; it is without plaits. Two rows of large pearls, intermixed with rubies and emeralds, hang about her neck.—I give you this detail of her dress, as it was probably the fashion of her day, and I suppose was esteemed extremely becoming. As for Petrarch, he is exceedingly ugly indeed, but has a very sensible black and yellow face.—Letters from Italy, in the Years 1770 and 1771, by Lady Miller, vol. i. p. 119.

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her person ; and, by indulging himself in the pleasing conceptions of his imagination, we may not be surpris'd if he compar'd her to the faultless beings of another world. Some there are who, in the characters of Petrarch and Laura, have discovered the debauchee and the harlot; and have even insinuated that Clement the Sixth, inform'd of the improper correspondence of these lovers, had threaten'd Petrarch with excommunication, unless he married Laura[†], whom it was supposed

†Alexander Velutellö, who lived in the 16th century, not content with the opinions of the learned concerning the family of Laura, went purposely to enquire at Avignon. He search'd all the registers, to find out when she was baptized, and when buried; copied all the pedigrees of the noble families of the country; and, after all his indefatigable enquiries and expensive journies, he flatter'd himself that he had discovered that Laura was the daughter of Henry de Chabeau, a Lord of Cabreria, and that she was baptized.

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supposed he had debauched: while others, verging on to the extremity of prudery, have conceived that the love of Petrarch was merely platonic, and perfectly philoso-

the 4th of June, 1314: Louis Beccadelli, afterwards archbishop of Ragusa, wishing to follow the example of Velutello, and to profit by the discovery of Laura's tomb, in the church of the Cordeliers at Avignon, in the year 1333, spent his time in many fruitless attempts in this pursuit, and many useless enquiries. At last Mr. l'Abbé de Sade, whom this discovery of the tomb personally interested, proved that Laura was the daughter of the Chevalier Audebert de Noves, a magistrate of Avignon—that she was born about the year 1308, in the suburbs of that town; and in the year 1325 married to Huques, son of Paul Sade. In an elegant pamphlet, published, I believe, about three years ago (for I have not seen it lately), intitled, *An Essay on the Life and Character of Petrarch*, the curious reader will meet with some very strong and ingenious arguments which prove that Laura never was married; and Velutello himself says, “*Per cosa certa habbiamo da tenere che non fosse maimaritata.*”

phical; founded only on the virtues of the heart, and the intellectual powers of the mind. But say, ye cold and phlegmatic definers of love! was it to the accomplishments of the mind that Petrarch paid such tender and fervid devotion? Could such warm and enthusiastic raptures, such expressions of love (by some deemed metaphysical), be wasted on mere mental talents, however useful and excellent, in a woman? It was indeed a passion as lasting as it was vehement; and the more Laura seemed to check the ardent transports of her lover, the more impetuous was he in his expressions, the more animated in his poetry. That she would sometimes bestow on him marks of her esteem and regard, at those moments when love and pity had some ascendant over her, is very evident from many parts of his sonnets; and at these blest intervals Petrarch breaks forth with raptures the most expressive of his short and momentary

mentary happiness. Petrarch, lost to the repose of peace and solitude, and abandoned to the most poignant sensations of love, had long endeavoured to stifle a passion which for so many years had been fostered with the tenderest hopes: a retrospect of the time that was past, consumed in idle and useless anxiety, was even painful and gloomy. With the determination therefore of banishing from his mind the too strongly impressed idea of his Laura, and devoting the remaining years of his life to the study of polite literature, he broke away abruptly from Avignon*, and travelled through France, Germany,

* The beauty of Laura, in the mean time, drew daily to Avignon a crowd of strangers, anxious to view the beautiful form of her, who had inspired the first of poets with the most exquisite and pathetic sentiments. Petrarch himself says of her, that "in all the conversations he ever held with her, she remonstrated with him on the fruitlessness of his passion; and, rather

Germany, and Italy, with earnest hopes of abandoning for ever the dearest object of his affections. Ever restless and unsettled, he wandered from country to country; and endeavoured, by mixing with the families of other nations, to wean himself from a passion, which, to his sorrow, he found firm and immovable. In 1330, having past part of the year in England, he returned to Avignon, with the bishop Colonna, between whose brother and Petrarch a sincere friendship subsisted. However foreign courts and foreign manners might have pleased and attracted him, Petrarch could not root out entirely from his breast the subtle poison of love and admiration. His absence from Laura served only to heighten his passion; and even the supposition of her favouring the addresses of other suitors, made her appear more than seem to favour his addresses, endeavoured to excite him to other pursuits."

lovely

Lovely and beautiful. At his return, chagrined perhaps at her coolness and reserve, he bade adieu to the gaities of Avignon, and retired to the beautiful spot of Valclusia, where he sought to bury, in peace and solitude, the increasing violence of his attachment. But not even in this favourite retreat could his imagination abandon his amiable Laura. Some of the most tender of his sonnets were written in his retirement, when his fancy, heated with the idea of his absent mistress, and having its free course, poured forth itself in complaints, with which (says he) the vallies, and even the air itself, resounded. In 1334, at this seat of the Muses, Petrarch began a Latin poem, in honor of Scipio Africanus, which he intitled *Africa**,
and

* When Petrarch wrote his *Africa*, he had not seen Silius Italicus. I will add the opinion of Boccacio on this poem—*Esto ævo nostro tertius exurgat Africanus,*

and which he finished after he had received the laureat's crown. An epic poem, however in-
different,

non minori gloriâ, majori tamen justitiâ delatus in æthera, versu viri celeberrimi Francisci Petrarchæ, nuper laureâ Romæ insigniti; tantâ enim facundiâ & lepiditate sermonis in medium trahitur, ut ferè ex tenebris longi silentii in amplissimam lucem deductus videatur.—That Petrarch himself had but a mean opinion of this poem, we may judge from the following anecdote—When he was at Verona, a great concourse of people assembled to behold so extraordinary a man: some among the crowd, with the hopes of pleasing him, began to recite parts of his *Africa*; but Petrarch burst into tears, and entreated them to desist; adding, that it would be his greatest pleasure to burn with his own hands so unfinished a work. In the life of Petrarch before cited, the authorels has said, “It seems extraordinary that Petrarch should never have shewn Boccacio a poem he had spent so much time in composing.” It appears very evident, by this short eulogium of Boccacio, that he *had* seen the *Africa*, since he says, “F. Petrarchæ nuper laureâ Romæ insigniti.” In 1341 Petrarch was crowned, and in 1375 Boccacio died, one year after Petrarch. If Boccacio had
never

different, in those days of ignorance was esteemed a prodigy. No sooner had Petrarch shewn the first sketch, and some fragments of it, to his friends, than copies were eagerly circulated, and the desire of every one to read such an astonishing performance was readily excited. This poem, and other Latin works which he wrote about that time, although infinitely inferior to the chaste style of Tully or Virgil, yet, upon the whole, were the best examples of modern Latinity since Claudian. The Italians, sensible of the magnificence of their ancestors, and proud of the name of Petrarch, determined to revive the games in the Capitol, and confer the laureate's crown on the most eminent poet of their nation^t. The senators of Rome, struck with

never seen the Africa till after the death of Petrarch, he would hardly have said *nuper*, after the lapse of 34 years.

^t Hodierno die, horâ fermè tertiâ, litteræ senatus mihi
redditæ

with the admiration which all Europe had for the merits of Petrarch, and animated with the earnest exhortations of Robert king of Naples, and the bishop Colonna, sent an invitation to him to accept of this distinguished honour. On the same day he received a letter from Robert de Bardi, Chancellor of the University of Paris, begging him to repair thither for the same purpose^u. He gave the preference to Rome,

as

redditæ sunt ; in quibus obnixè admodum, et multis persuasionibus, ad percipiendam lauream poeticam Romam vocor. Eodem hoc ipso die, circa horam decimam, super eâdem re, ab illustri viro Roberto, studii Parisiensis Cancellario, concive meo, mihiq; et rebus meis amicissimo, nuncius cum litteris ad me venit. Ille me exquisitissimis rationibus ut eam Parisium hortatur. Urget enim hinc novitatis gratia, hinc reverentia vetustatis, hinc amicus, hinc patria.—Epist. Thomæ Messanenfi.

^u Certatim duæ maximæ urbes exposcerent, Roma atque Parisius, altera mundi caput & urbium regina, nutrix altera

tera

as the most celebrated city in the world. So modest was he, and so little sensible of the extraordinary talents which he possessed, that he determined to go to Naples, that he might be examined whether he was worthy of such high honours or not. Easter-day, in 1341, was the time appointed for this festival^w. Petrarch,

tera nostri temporis studiorum. Post varias deliberationes, ad extremum non alibi quam Roma, super cineribus antiquorum vatum inque illorum sede, percipere, ingenti alios fratre tuo suatore & consultore, disposui, hoc ipso die iter aggredi. In quo plusculum temporis exigitur; adeundusenim rex, videnda Parthenope, inde iter erit Romam.

^w Sennuccio del Bene, a poet of Florence, who was an eye-witness, thus describes this public solemnity--Petrarch, clothed in a velvet robe of violet colour, and bound with a zone of diamonds, was conveyed in a triumphal car to the Capitol; and there, amidst the applause of an innumerable multitude, was presented with three crowns, of laurel, ivy, and myrtle.

See F. Petrarchæ Epist. Sec. lib. v. Ren. Sen.

led

led in triumphal procession to the Capitol², was crowned with a wreath of laurel by the senator Orso del Anquillara, amidst the acclamations of the people of Rome.

After this festival Petrarch went to Parma, and staid some time in the family of the Corregos, by whose interest he gained the archdea-

² Idibus Aprilis, anno ætatis hujus ultimæ 1341, in Capitolio Romæ, magnâ populi frequentîâ, et ingenti gaudio, peractum est quod nudius tertius de me Rex apud Neapolim decreverat. Urfus Anquillariæ comes, ac senator, præalti vir ingenii, regio judicio probatum laureis frondibus insignivit. After this he adds an anecdote of his being robbed, which I will not omit—Cæterâ supra spem et supra fidem successisse noveris : at, ut recenti experimento cognoscerem quam lætis juncta sint tristitia, vix mænia urbis egressi, ego cum his qui me terrâ et pelago secuti erant, in latronum armatas manus incidimus, e quibus ut liberati, et Romam redire compulsi sumus : quantusque ibi ob hanc causam populi motus ! et ut die postero certiori armatorum fulti præsidio discessimus, ac cæteros viæ casus si explicare tentavero, longa erit historia ---Epist^a. Sec^a. Barbato Sulmonensi.

conry

conry of Parma, at that time vacant. In 1342, Clement the Sixth being elected Pope, Petrarch, and the famous Gabrina (more commonly known by the name of Cola del Rienzi), were deputed as ambassadors to carry the complimentary letters. Clement, a professed admirer of Petrarch, conferred on him a rich priory near Pisa, and wished to create him his apostolical secretary; but Petrarch, ever a foe to restriction and confinement, begged to be excused from accepting this important office. It was at this period, surrounded with friends and protectors, whose inclination and study it was to render him every possible service, that he lost his best and most illustrious patron, bishop Colonna; and, as if it was by the decree of heaven that his happiness should be embittered with the most poignant affliction, the news of the untimely death of his mistress reached him at Parma. On the 6th of April 1347, the same day and the same hour

hour when, one-and-twenty years before, she was first seen by Petrarch, died the beauteous and accomplished Laura. This melancholy event, which Petrarch had foreseen, and which his mistress, not cheerful as usual, but pale and weeping, had announced to him in a dream, happened whilst he was at Verona. The excess of his grief will be easily conceived by those whose feelings are awake to the warm glow of sympathy; since, even to the cold and inanimate heart, the pen of an historian can give no adequate idea ⁷. The sonnets which he composed after her death, to beguile the melanco-

⁷ Who can read these lines without wishing to know what beautiful and lovely form is the subject of such tender expressions?

—— Lampeggiar del' angelico riso
 Che sole an far in terra un paradiso
 Poca polvere son, che nulla sente
 Ed io pur vivo

Sonnet 252.-

ly

ly hours, where he so pathetically laments the loss of this his dearest and most valuable treasure, are conceived and executed with the highest elegance and expression. To the chilled and benumbed apathist the marvellous tenderness of Petrarch appears tame and insipid. But it is not to these that the poet makes his appeal; it is to the compassionate heart, which can be forcibly affected with the tender emotions of sensibility. Petrarch, fixed as it were with the shock, spent the remainder of the year at Parma, in inexpressible sorrow. The contemplation of his misfortunes seemed to have entirely engaged his thoughts; but, sensible of his too firm attachment to an object which existed only in imagination, he endeavoured, by a tour into Italy, to dissipate the cloud of sorrow which loured over him. After having visited Rome and Florence, he returned to Valclusia,

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the seat of solitude and the Muses²; but the sight of this favourite retreat, and the well-known prospect of Avignon, opened anew the wounds of affliction, and restored the image of his departed Laura. At the death of Clement the Sixth³, which happened in 1352, Innocent

• Valle, che de'lamenti miei se' piena,
 Fiume, che spesso del mio pianger cresci,
 Fere silvestre, vaghi augelli, e pesci
 Che l'una, e l'altra verde riva affrena;
 Aria de' miei sospir calda, e serena,
 Dolce sentier, che sì amaro riesci
 Colle, che mi piacesti, hor mi rincresci,
 Ou' ancor per usanza amor mi mena,
 Ben riconosco in voi l'usate forme,
 Non lasso in me, che da sì lieta vita
 Son fatto albergo d'infinita doglia.
 Quinci vedea 'l mio bene, e per quest'orme
 Torno à veder, ond' al ciel nuda è gita
 Lasciando in terra la sua bella spoglia.

Sonnet 261.

• The very vehement invectives and severe sarcasms
 which

Recent the Sixth was elected to the papal chair; and so indifferent was he in every thing that re-

which Petrarch is continually throwing out against physicians, may be easily accounted for. Clement being dangerously ill, and wishing to follow the advice of the eminent physicians, Petrarch, warning him of his danger if he trusted to different opinions, desired him to choose only one, whom he knew to be faithful and well informed. The person by whom he sent this message making some mistake, Clement desired Petrarch to send him his opinion in writing. The letter unfortunately falling into the hands of the Pope's chief physician, he was highly incensed at this insult, which he supposed was intended for the whole profession, and instantly returned a most cutting and severe answer. This drew from Petrarch all those bitter strokes of ridicule and contempt which are occasionally introduced in his Letters, and which firmly fixed that aversion which he ever had to the study and professors of physic.—*Petrarque etoit grand ennemi (says Menage) des medécins, sur les mots, " Ars longa vita brevis," qui sont au commencement des Aphorismes d' Hippocrate, il dit d'eux que, vitam dum brevem dixerunt, brevissimam effecerunt.*

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garded literature, and so weak in understanding, that he suspected Petrarch to be a magician^b. The friends of the injured poet advised him instantly to undeceive the Pope, by going to him in person; but he, neglecting their advice, and despising the suppositions of this prejudiced prince, chose rather to quit Valclusia, and return to Italy. At Milan he was detained by the archbishop John Visconti, who sent him as his ambassador, in 1354, to Venice, on a treaty of peace. Petrarch, disappointed in his hopes, returned to Milan, and thence went to Mantua, at the request of Charles the Fourth, who received him with the most flattering marks of esteem, and wished him to accompany the court to Rome; but this honor Petrarch refused. In a letter to Charles^c, he remon-

^b Virgil, the great favourite of Petrarch, was supposed to study the dark science of witchcraft.

^c See his printed letter in his second book de Vitâ Solitariâ.

strated

frustrated with him on the folly of his journey, and his want of attention to the disorders of the state ; but so far was the emperor from correcting this liberty, that he still honored him with his correspondence, and conferred on him the titular honor of Count Palatine. All these posts and preferments, although high and lucrative, were only the source of trouble and fatigue. To Petrarch the tumult of a court was far from agreeable ; and that he might enjoy retirement, so congenial to his soul, he chose a spot called Linternum, which belonged to the family of the Visconti, where he spent the greatest part of his time in reading, walking, and frequently paying visits to his patron. In 1360, Petrarch, at the request of Visconti, went as ambassador to Paris, to compliment John II. on his return from England, and accession to the throne. John, a lover and protector of the muses (whose disposition was to-

tally unlike that of his turbulent father Philip), received him with caresses, and treated him with the most friendly marks of hospitality. At his return from Paris he received an invitation to the court of the emperor Charles ; but this he refused, pleading, as an excuse, his age and infirmities. It was not from Charles that Petrarch wished for honors and riches, for of these he had sufficient; it was a remedy for the miseries and misfortunes of his country. However weak in other respects, Charles supported, with honor to himself, a firm and inviolable friendship for Petrarch ; and, as a present at the birth of his son, in 1361, sent him a goblet of gold, of great value and exquisite workmanship. The same year he received an invitation to the courts of John king of France, and Pope Innocent the Sixth; but from both these he modestly excused himself: and, in a letter to Cardinal de Taillerand, he mentions how greatly

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ly he was surprised that a pope, who was so weak as to suppose him a magician, could with any consistency offer him the post of Apostolical Secretary. Padua, Milan, and Venice, were the places chosen by Petrarch for his summer residence. At Ferrara, from the Marquis Nicolas the Second, he received distinguished honours; and at last retired to the beautiful town of Arqua, celebrated by the residence and death of Petrarch, which happened on the evening of the 18th of July, 1374.—He had retired to his study, as usual; and was found the next day dead, with his head resting on a book.

Thus, full of years and glory, died Francis Petrarch, the most learned and accomplished scholar of the age.—His funeral obsequies were, like Dante's, conducted with the utmost magnificence. The bishops of Padua, Vicenza, Verona, and Trevisa, personally assisted in the ceremony. The nobility and uni-

versity of Padua attended in a body; and the pall, which was of cloth of gold, fringed with two rows of lace and ermine, was supported by sixteen doctors of the university. Bonaventura de Peraga, an intimate friend of Petrarch, pronounced the funeral oration over the body, which was interred in the church of Arqua, where a tomb of red marble was afterwards built, with columns in the old taste, of which Petrarch had been a professed admirer^d.

^d On this tomb were engraved these three Latin verses, written by Petrarch :

Frigida Francisci tegit hic lapis ossa Petrarchæ.

Suscipe, Virgo parens, animam; fate Virgine, parce!

Fessaque jam terris, cœli requiescat in arce.

In 1667 Paul de Valdezucchi, proprietor of Petrarch's house at Arqua, had his bust in bronze placed on this mausoleum. In 1630 some persons broke into this tomb, and took away some of Petrarch's bones to sell them. The senate of Venice, enraged at this sacrilege, punished those who were guilty of it with extreme severity.--Life of Petrarch, vol. ii. p. 544.

In

In his youth, Petrarch, ever a votary to love, had two children, the mother of whom is not known, but supposed to have been of noble family. The eldest, a son, died at Verona, in 1361, aged 24 years—the other, a daughter, named Frances, born, according to the Abbé de Sade, in 1348, was married to Francis Brosfano, whom Petrarch in his will appointed his heir.—Whether Petrarch thought himself poor, or whether it is through modesty that he says in his will, “*Prædicti autem amici de parvitate hujusmodi legatorum non me accusent, sed fortunam,*” I leave to the reader to determine. But if we examine his will, we shall find that, considering the times in which he lived, and the necessary expences of his many journeys, his many and valuable ecclesiastical preferments, he must have been worth considerable property.

The chief legacies in his will are as follows :

“*Lego autem ecclesiæ Paduæ ducatos ducentos*

auri, ad emendum aliquantulum terræ. Lego autem ecclesiæ apud quam sepeliar ducatos viginti; aliis autem ecclesiis quatuor ordinum Mendicantium, si ibi fuerint, ducatos quinque pro quâlibet. Pauperibus Christi lego centum ducatos distribuendos; ita tamen, ut de dicta quantitate nulla ultra singulos ducatos accipiat. Magnifico domino meo Pæduano (Francisco de Carrariæ), quia ipse per Dei gratiam non eget, et ego nihil habeo dignum se, dimitto tabulam meam, sive iconam, B. Mariæ, operis Joctii^d, pictoris egregii. De equis meis, si quos habuero in tempore transitûs mei qui placeant, Bonzanello di Vicentiæ, et Lorbardo a Serico, concivibus Paduanis, volo quod inter eos sortiantur; et, præter hoc, dicto Lorbardo, qui rerum suarum curam deposuit, ut meas res ageret, obligatum me confiteor in 134 ducatis auri, et solidis 16, quos expendit in utilitatibus meis, &

^d i. e. Giotto.

multo

multo amplius. Item lego eidem Lorbardo cyphum meum, parvum, rotundum, argenteum & auratum, cum quo bibat aquam, quam libenter bibit, multo libentius quam vinum. Presbytero Joanni a Bocheta, custodi Ecclesiæ nostræ, breviarium meum magnum, quod Venetiis emi pretio centum librarum. Domino de Certaldo, seu Boccatio, verecundè admodum tanto viro, tam modicum lego quinquaginta florenos auri de Florentiâ, pro unâ veste hyemali, ad studium, lucubrationesque nocturnas. Magistro T. Bambasæ de Ferrara lego leutam meum bonum. Magistro Joanni de Horologio, physico, lego quinquagintos ducatos auri, pro emendo sibi unum parvum annulum digito gestandum, in memoriam mei. De familiaribus autem domesticis sic ordino: Barthol^o. de Senis, viginti ducatos; Zilio de Florentiæ, domicilio meo, supra salarium suum, si quid debetur, viginti ducatos: et si haberem plures, aut alios
plures

plures paucioresve domicillos, supra salariū faum, pro quolibet, florenos seu ducatos viginti; famulis duos pro quolibet; coquo duos. Omnium sanè bonorum mobilium & immobilium quæ habeo, vel habiturus sum, ubicunque sunt vel erunt, unum solum heredem instituo Franciscolum de Borsano, filium quondam domini Amicoli de Borsano, civem Mediolani."

By the death of Petrarch, Italian poetry, and literature in general, suffered a severe and lasting shock. It was owing to him that a taste for the muses was more generally diffused throughout Italy, and the loss of Dante compensated by his eminent talents. The language of Italy, at this period, began to assume new beauties; but so little did Petrarch suppose that his sonnets were the cause of this change, that he says in one of them (P. II. 252), "If I had conceived that these poetical complaints would have been so much esteemed, I would have composed"

composed more, and in a better style.*" By this it appears that unless love had inspired him with such melancholy strains, Petrarch would hardly have exercised his genius on indifferent subjects, since he was only excited to it by his passion, and in his poetry spoke only the language of his heart; for, as his countryman says,

Amor primà trovò le rime, e versi,
E suoni, e canti, ed ogni melodio.

The first dawns of revived literature appeared in the metrical romances of the Troubadours, or Provençal poets, which, although written in a language composed of Latin and Gaulic, were nevertheless adapted to catch the attention of the illiterate by the pompous descriptions of heroes, tournaments, feasts, and triumphs; and among those of a more polished mind were con-

* La langue Italienne (says Cardinal Perron) est fort propre pour la choses d'amour, a cause de la quantité de diminutifs qu' elle possède.

sidered

gian, both Troubadours of eminence. These poets wrote on the war which at that time subsisted between Venice and Geneva, and in a manuscript at Modena their verses are preserved. To these may be added Sordello, a man of rank at Mantua, who flourished about the middle of the 13th century : he was particularly well skilled in Provençal poetry ; and, according to Dante, spoke the Italian language with fluency. The poetry of Italy we may consider as taking its style, though not its rise, from France ; and in the hands of Guido Guinicelli, Cavalcanti, Guitton d'Arezzo, and lastly Dante, considerably softened and improved.

Concerning the first introduction of metre into Italian poetry, let us cite a passage from Claude Duret's curious History of Languages. *Le Veluteglio, en ses commentaires en langue Italienne, sur les triomphes de Petrarque*
 écrivent

slaughter that modern times had yet exhibited, gave to their romantic fiction a rich glow of imagery, and clothed in the most pompous ornaments their extravagant ideas of love and valour. The language of these poets was so generally understood, that Brunetto Latini chose rather to make use of it, than write in the inharmonious tongue of his own country. That there were some however who only imitated the Provençal poets in style, and not language, has been before mentioned; but to the account of those bards let us add, that, after Folchetto, a native of Geneva, had rendered himself illustrious among the Troubadours at Marseilles, an enthusiastic ardor instantly spread itself over Italy, and a contest for superiority in this species of writing roused the imagination. In the Vatican, and library of Modena, are preserved manuscripts of the lives of Boniface Calvi, a Genevese, and Bartholomew Georgi, a Venetian.

tian, both Troubadours of eminence. These poets wrote on the war which at that time subsisted between Venice and Geneva, and in a manuscript at Modena their verses are preserved. To these may be added Sordello, a man of rank at Mantua, who flourished about the middle of the 13th century: he was particularly well skilled in Provençal poetry; and, according to Dante, spoke the Italian language with fluency. The poetry of Italy we may consider as taking its style, though not its rise, from France; and in the hands of Guido Guinicelli, Cavalcanti, Guittone d'Arezzo, and lastly Dante, considerably softened and improved.

On the first introduction of metre into Italian poetry, let us cite a passage from Duret's curious History of Language, *Integlio, en ses commences*. *Jangue*, sur les triomphes d'

écrivent qui les rythmes Italiennes, et façon de composer par sonnets, & stances est provenue, et procedu, selon aucuns, des Siciliens, lorsqu'un Guillaume Ferrabrach, frere de Robert Guichard, et autres seigneurs de Calabre & Pouille, enfans de Tancred Francois-Normand, les porterent de la provence en Sicile, pays d'Italie, & qu'en ce temps les François s'ayderent de ceste forme & façon de composer selon la rapport de Francois Petrarque, en la preface de ces Epitres. Les autres disent que cette façon de composer rythme, sonnets, & stances, est provenue des Hetruriens, desquels est emane le premier et plus ancien language Tufcan : Nos François veulent que cela est procede de l'invention des poetes Provençaux, qui florissoient environ l'an de salut 1162, ainsi que l'ont bien remarque Colotius & Bembus, en leur discours de cette matiere (p. 819).—That rhyme was used by the Troubadours, is an established fact; but that

that it was first used in the Leonine verses^f; which existed long before those of Provence; is, we are led to conjecture, indisputable. Rhyme therefore, whether in Latin or French, is supposed to have been used in Sicily, and thence transplanted into Italy.—Concerning the state of Latin literature, before and at the time of Petrarch, let us add a few cursory remarks: When the empire of Rome fell a prey to the repeated attacks of the northern nations; and, flooded as it were with a torrent of barbarism^g;
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^f Some have falsely supposed that Léonius, a Latin poet in the 12th century, canon of Paris, who wrote the greatest part of the Old Testament in verse, was the author and inventor of the Leonine verses; but we have reason to suppose that they were in vogue many years before him.—See Diff. II. Hist. Engl. Poetry, vol. 1.; and Du Cange's Glossary.

^g In the case of most other conquests, the language of a country has not been totally lost, but mixed with that of the conquerors; and out of that mixture a corrupt language

the Latin language gave way to the foreign idioms of the Goths and Lombards, the pure and perfect style of the Roman tongue, corrupted and debased, lost its original strength and elegance. A mixed jargon of Latin, Celtic, and German, was all that remained ; which in the course of time, and by slow degrees, lost its asperity, and formed itself into the language of Italy : not soft and refined as at present (for that required long labour, and a milder disposition), but rough and dissonant. A long and dark night of ignorance succeeded. To books only could the learned refer, as the stores of Latin literature, to support and propagate the

language produced. This was the case of the conquest of several provinces of the Roman empire by the northern nations. In Italy, for example, the language that took place after it was subdued by the Lombards, was a mixture of the Latin and the language of that people, which is the present Italian.

-Origin and Progress of Language, vol. i. p. 581.

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original

original language : but, alas ! learned there were none who were capable of referring, and manuscripts very few which were known to have escaped the general wreck. In the year 501, Latin ceased totally to be spoken in Italy : the natives themselves, familiarized to foreign terms and expressions, no longer attempted to support their falling language. Ignorance and barbarity overshadowed alike the tongues and the hearts of man : nor was it till the introduction of established schools by Charlemagne that the clouds of darkness began to dispel ; and a gleam, though faint, and scarce visible, shone on an unenlightened world. Churches and monasteries confined within their own walls the tender saplings of learning, which, for want of room to branch forth, soon withered and died. The pampered monks, “ thriving on their fat pluralities,” through indolence and ignorance, checked every communication

munication of liberal information; and, contracted in their ideas of knowledge, chose rather to indulge themselves in the gloomy views of superstition, than enjoy the prospect of revived literature, rising as it were like the sun from mist and clouds. Learning (to use the words of an ingenious writer) was considered as dangerous to true piety; and darkness was necessary to hide the usurpations of the clergy, who were then exalting themselves on the ruins of civil power. The ancient poets and orators were represented as seducers to the paths of destruction; Virgil and Horace were the pimps of Hell; Ovid a lecherous fiend; and Cicero a vain declaimer, impiously elated with the talent of heathenish reasoning. The circumscribed notions of knowledge and literature were entirely swallowed up in logical treatises and uninteresting metaphysics; the dry and abstruse pages of Aristotle were better suited to

their dull and plodding disposition: and, for near three centuries, these lazy and unedifying priests were capable only of producing mysterious systems of theological speculation, or useless disputations.—About the beginning of the seventh century, the gloom of superstitious ignorance gave way to the light of rational instruction.—The Arabs, who in the ravaging of the Asiatic provinces had rescued from destruction the works of some of the most eminent writers of Greece, by frequent incursions into Europe, imported with them the principles of useful learning into a country totally dark and uninformed. In Spain and Africa universities were founded for the better propagation of rational studies; and, by the liberal encouragement of Charlemagne, the western world became familiarized to the works of the Grecian and Roman writers.—In the beginning of the eleventh century, several professors from
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the universities of Spain undertook the education of youth in Italy. Their method of instruction comprehended the most numerous and useful sciences; and was adapted to inspire taste and refinement, more than the perplexity of scholastic disputation. Before the year 1000, the monks of Mount Cassino are said to have distinguished themselves not only for their knowledge of the sciences, but their attention to polite literature, and an acquaintance with the classics. Tacitus, Jornandes, Josephus, Ovid's *Fasti*, Cicero, Seneca, Donatus the grammarian, Virgil, Theocritus, and Homer, had been collected by their learned abbot Desiderius (or Didier^h), who permitted the monks

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* He must not be confounded with Guillaume de Saint Didier, a Provençal poet of the 12th century, who translated the fables of Esop into Provençal verse. He wrote a treatise on fencing; and another on dreams, in which he laid down rules how they might be always true and

to transcribe them. Cassiodorus, who latterly belonged to this convent, had introduced among the monks the practice of copying manuscripts; and in the convent of St. Bennet a fixed portion of the day was set apart, to be spent entirely in this very laudable exercise. But indolence had so insensibly crept upon them, that in the ninth and tenth centuries this occupation was neglected, for the sole purpose of composing pious legends, unedifying homilies, and the lives of saints and martyrs. To Desiderius it was left to procure new copies, and revive the old. This illustrious man (afterwards Pope, under the name of Victor III.) was elect-

pleasant. The secret consisted in not loading the stomach, lest the gross fumes rising up to the head, should cause melancholy ideas. The works of the abbot Didier are, *Dialogorum Libri Quatuor de Miraculis S. Benedicti, aliorumque Monachorum in Monasterio Cassinensi*---*Cantus quidam de S. Mauro, abbate Cassinensi*---*Epistolæ ad Diversos*.---See Possevinus, vol. i. p. 458.

ed Abbot in 1058. His zeal for the cause of religion and literature, his refined taste for the polite arts, and his munificence in supporting them, will ever reflect the highest honor both on his head and heart. So liberal was he to his society, that he not only procured for them books in every science and every language, but rebuilt both the church and monastery, in a style truly magnificent. From all parts of Italy he collected architects, sculptors, painters; and artists skilled in mosaic work, in marble; gold, silver, and ivory; and from Greece the inlayers of marble for the pavements; and he also had the art taught to his monks.—Jerome, abbot of Pomposa, towards the end of the eleventh century, followed the example of Desiderius, in amassing books. An account of his labours in the cause of literature was published by P. Montfaucon.—In 1053, an Italian, named Papias, published a Latin dictionary,

which, although defective in many parts, contains some curious information¹.—The monks of Cassino, far from devoting all their time to transcribing, began to circulate among themselves little pieces of poetry, and by degrees to compose larger works.—William of Pouille wrote a poem in five books, as a history of the Normans, from their arrival in Italy to the death of the celebrated Robert Guiscard.—Alfanus, archbishop of Salerno, is the only one whose works we are acquainted with.—Another poetical historian was Donizon, a priest and monk of Canossa, who wrote in verse the Life of the Countess Matilda, from her birth.—The number of those who, about the year 1183, applied themselves to the study of Latin poetry

¹ Benedictus, monachus Cassinensis clarus, circa A. 1060, scripsit Historiam S. Secundini, Episcopi Trojani, in Apuliâ; quæ, cum Hymnis in eundem Secundinum, exstat apud Ughellum.—Fabricii Bibl. Med. Æt. iv. p. 555.

in Italy, is extremely limited; but those who wrote verses merely for chants, services, and other pious offices, are too numerous to be comprehended in this short view.—In the 13th century, whilst the spirit of classical Latin poetry was universally prevailing, our countryman (says Mr. Warton) Geoffrey de Vinefauf, an accomplished scholar, and educated not only in the priory of St. Erideswide in Oxford, but in the universities of France and Italy (he was a professor at Bologna); published, while at Rome, a critical didactic poem, intitled, “*De Novâ Poeticâ*. This book is dedicated to Pope Innocent III. and its intention was to recommend and illustrate the new and legitimate mode of versification which had lately begun to flourish in Europe, in opposition to the Leonine or barbarous species.”—Stefanardo de Vimercate, a priest distinguished for his learning (the first who was elected Professor of Theology

ology in the cathedral of Milan), wrote the history of Archbishop Otto Visconti, in Latin verse; which, considering the age, was pure and elegant. Richard, judge of Venoza, wrote an elegiac poem, *De Nuptiis*; and James de Benevento was the author of some *Carmina Moralia*, preserved in MS. in the library of the Marquis Ricardi at Florence.—After these an unknown author wrote some epigrams, *De Balneis Pozzalanicis*.—At this period the foreign languages were taught in Italy; and the Greek and Arabic, whence they translated the works of Aristotle and other philosophers, became a necessary study. Hebrew also was among their literary accomplishments.—John of Capua, about the year 1262, translated from the Hebrew his *Directorium Vitæ Humanæ*, which he says was translated from the Indian language into the Persian, thence into Arabic, and from the Arabic

Arabic into the Hebrew. This Directorium contains the well-known Culila & Dimna, five *Στιφανιτη και Ιχνηλατη*, a collection of sayings, part true, and part fabulous, on moral and civil subjects, and contains instruction for courtiers.

It cannot be supposed that, in this short sketch, I can mention every one who wrote either in Latin verse or prose, before Petrarch; suffice it therefore to name one, whose exertions in the cause of literature have been but little known, and less praised. The most illustrious therefore of all those who wrote their histories in Latin, was Albertino Mussato^k, the

^k The name and writings of Mussato were hardly known till they were brought forward to the public notice in the Essay on Pope, which I shall not be accused of partiality (as I only join the voice of the world) in calling the most agreeable and judicious piece of criticism produced by the present age.

Hist. of Eng. Poetry, vol. ii. p. 400.
historian

historian of Padua, eminently skilled in history, poetry, and eloquence : he was born in the year 1261. The loss of his father when he was young, the charge of a numerous family, and the poverty which seemed to threaten him, were the source of innumerable difficulties. In this situation he gained a scanty income by copying manuscripts for the scholars of the university; and, having considerable practice, he naturally imbibed a taste for literature. His acute genius beginning to expand and display its powers, gained him great patronage; and his deep knowledge of law procured him reputation and riches. In the year 1325, after having borne many considerable offices, and served in defence of his country, he was banished to Chiozza, where he died, very old, in 1329. In his exile he amused himself with revising and finishing his historical works. The first he calls *Historia Augusta*; containing, in sixteen books,

books, the life and actions of the emperor Henry the Seventh, to whom he was sent as ambassador by the Paduans six different times: in his history he has inserted all his speeches before this prince, and in the senate at Padua. His second was a kind of record of the events in Italy, but particularly in Padua, under the Great Can della Scala, and the consequences of his expedition. The third contained a relation of the methods used by the Great Can to gain the government of Padua.—When he had finished these works, he sketched out a Life of Louis de Bavaria, but death stopped his progress.—All these histories were written with truth and eloquence: and, as the critics observe, if in his style he had added purity and elegance, Padua would have boasted of a second Livy.

Muffato was so highly honored for his abilities, that the bishop of Padua crowned him publicly

licly with laurel; and issued an edict, that on every Christmas day the doctors, regents, and professors of the two colleges in that city, should go to his house in solemn procession, with wax tapers in their hands, and offer him a triple crown¹.—As I have spoken of him only as an historian, it is but proper to mention him as the chief restorer of Latin poetry. His three books of the Siege of Padua—his Eclogues, Elegies, Epitaphs, Hymns—and his two tragedies, *Ecerinis* and *Achilleis*, the first of which is the fate of *Ecerinus*, tyrant of Padua—are evident marks of poetical talents. To suppose that these tragedies are conducted with the proper rules of unity and time, although on the plan of the Greek drama, would be absurd; since they are but bad copies of their bad original, *Seneca*. To speak the truth then, however they have

¹ By another decree, public lectures were instituted on his historical and poetical works.

been

been said to be the first regular tragedies since the barbarous ages, they are uninteresting, poor, and inconsiderable.—But to Mussato the greatest praise is due for attempting to revive and reanimate the slumbering spirit of tragedy, buried under the gloom of ignorance for so many ages. To a man therefore whose merits are so little acknowledged, I feel a pleasure in communicating my tribute of praise, trifling as it is, and in mentioning a name so conspicuous in the annals of modern learning. The study of the Italian language in the universities proceeded from disposition and taste; that of the Latin, from a sense of its superiority, and a desire of reputation. It was not his Sonnets that procured Petrarch the distinguished honour of being crowned in the Capitol—it was to his Latin poem “Africa,” his Eclogues, and Epistles, that he owed all his glory.—From the restorers of the Latin tongue Petrarch is supposed

supposed to have received all his knowledge in that language : but to his capacious mind, which could not be bounded by the narrow view of modern Latinity, the images of the Roman writers ever appeared. Animated with the slight acquaintance with their works, and disappointed at the useless labours of bad copyists, he determined to collect from foreign countries the best copies that remained of the writers of the Augustan age. In the 11th century, although public seminaries and universities were founded, books were so extremely dear and scarce, that it was in the power of but few men to support the expence of maintaining and paying copyists. The pay of these copyists was so expensive, that the fortunes of private persons could not afford them an opportunity of multiplying books. It was the taste of the times to ornament with gold the capital letters of every word, and to illuminate

nate the margins with the richest and most profuse colouring^m. Missals and breviaries were the only books on which they exercised their talent. In that age the word *library* was often given to a small collection of duplicate Bibles. To give an idea of a library in those days, I will add a catalogue of the books of Cardinal Guala, left by will to the monastery of St. Andrew, founded by him at Vercelli: A large Bible written in French, bound in purple, ornamented with flowers of gold, and capital letters richly gilt; another Bible bound in blue

^m *Hodie scriptores non sunt scriptores, sed pictores*, says Sarti; in his History of the University of Bologna; since the luxury of literature consisted in splendid embellishments, not in the intrinsic value of the books. At Milan there were fifty copyists; and at Bologna a great number, who in writing and painting had great merit; but, as they regarded beauty more than correctness, we may imagine that errors unavoidably crept into the text.

H

leather;

leather; another in red; a fourth in English; a fifth very small, but valuable, in French characters of gold, and ornamented with purple; the books of Exodus and Leviticus in old characters; the twelve prophets in one volume, in Lombard letters; St. Gregory's books of morality, in very legible old letters of Arezzo.—This was a library which, for scarcity and value, was considered as an inestimable treasure.—The collection of Cervotto Accursio was in great reputation at Bologna, although it consisted only of twenty volumes of Law.

At the time of Petrarch, near two centuries after, the same complaint was made of the scarceness of books, and the incorrectness of transcribers. How, says he, in one of his Dialoguesⁿ, can we remedy the faults of these copyists, who by ignorance and indolence hurt the cause of literature? Whoever

ⁿ De rem. utriusque fort. lib. i. dial. 43.

can paint on parchment, and hold a pen, passes among us for an eminent transcriber, though perhaps he has neither sense nor talents. If Livy, Cicero, or Pliny particularly, could rise from their graves, and peruse their mutilated works, would they not affirm that what they read was not their own, but that of some barbarian? And, in a letter to Boccaccio, he complains that he could find no one who could faithfully transcribe his treatise *De Vitâ Solitariâ*; and adds, that it is astonishing that a book, which was written in a few months, should scarcely be copied in as many years. The only source which was left, was to collate and correct those manuscripts which were generally known, and to search for others yet undiscovered. Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Colluccio, distinguished themselves in this kind of literary labour. To correct dates, and determine upon the exact time in

which each author lived, was a work as necessary as it was difficult; since, in a letter to a learned man of Messina, Petrarch discovers his ignorance in supposing that Cicero and Plato were poets, that Ennius and Statius were contemporaries; and in not knowing that Nevius and Plautus ever existed. To separate truth from fable, to prune and lop off the interpolations of commentators, and to purge from barbarisms and faults the original text, demanded the utmost attention; and lastly, to discover the traces of any remains of antiquity, required labour and money.—In all these several particulars, literature found a firm and persevering friend in Petrarch. The numerous acquaintance which he had in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Greece, England, and Scotland, offered their assistance. But, to shew more nobly his unremitting zeal in the cause of science, he travelled into foreign countries, and never
mitted

omitted to search the libraries of ancient monasteries for unknown manuscripts. By these means he discovered copies of books which he had never seen; and, by the help of others, he corrected those which he was in possession of. In all these researches Petrarch found only the Orations and Familiar Letters of Cicero, and a bad copy of Quintilian: the honour of discovering a perfect copy of this writer, so little known, was reserved for Poggius; who acquaints us, in one of his letters written from Constance in 1417, that, in the bottom of a tower of the monastery of St. Gall°, he met with

• Quintilian fut racheté a Basle des mains d'un Charcutier, pendant le concile qui s'y tenoit; et le seul exemplaire original qu'on en ait jamais vu. Agobard (archbishop of Lyons in the ninth century) fut trouvé a Lyon chez un relieur par Papire le Masson.—Maffeo published this manuscript at Paris, in 1603, in 8vo; and the original was, after his death, deposited by his

with this invaluable author, together with the three first books of Valerius Flaccus's *Argonautica*,

brother in the king of France's library. An improved edition was published at Paris, in two vols. 8vo, in 1666, by Mr. Baluze.—I cannot forbear adding the following anecdote from the same author. *Le Gouverneur de feu M. de Marquis de Rouville jouant a la longue paume dans une terre pres de Saumur, lut par hazard ce qui estoit escrit sur le parchemin de son batoir, & reconnut que c'estoit une feuille de la seconde decade de Tite Live. Il courut en meme tems chez le faiseur de batoirs, qui lui dit qu'il n'y avoit pas longtems qu'il avoit employé la derniere feuille.*—*Menagiana*, tom. iii. p. 167.—*Le Pogge avoit en effet trouvé chez un vendeur des salines, le real exemplaire, qui estoit reste des ouvrages de ce fameux auteur (speaking of Quintilian), & il avant rendu public*—says the ingenious author of the *Characters of Ancient and Modern Writers*; but on what authority I know not. The very copy of Quintilian, which Poggius found, belonged to Lord Sunderland, whose valuable library is now at Blenheim. Of Tacitus the same author says, *Les cinq premiers livres des Annales de Tacite avoient été recouvez dans la monastere de Corbie, sur la Vezér en Allemagne;*

nautica, and Asconius Pedianus's Comments on eight Orations of Tully^r. The Familiar Epistles of Cicero, which Petrarch found, were the source of the greatest pleasure that he ever received. That he spared no expence in this search, is very evident from many parts of his letters, and particularly from this—*Quoties pecuniam misi, non per Italiam modò ubi eram notior, sed per Gallias atque Germaniam, et usque ad Hispanias atque Britanniam: dicam quod mireris, et in Græciam misi; et unde Ciceronem expectabam, habui Homerum.*

Allemagne; que Leon X. n'avoit jamais reçu un présent plus agreable puisque celui qui le lui fit, eut cinq cens ecus d'or pour recompense; et que Come de Medicis, un des plus sages princes de son temps, s'etoit formé sur les maximes de cet incomparable politique.

^r This very ancient manuscript, with a copy written by Petrarch himself, together with the Epistles to Atticus, and works of Virgil, is preserved in the Laurentine library at Florence.

Concerning the first introduction of Homer into Italy, Boccacio¹, I believe, is supposed to have

¹ This great man visited Petrarch at Venice, in 1363; and carried with him Leontius Pilatus of Thessalonica, a man of genius, but of haughty temper, whom Petrarch styles Magna Bellua. From this singular man, who perished in a voyage from Constantinople to Venice (he was struck with lightning while clinging to the mast), Petrarch received a Latin translation of the Iliad and Odyssey. To these words of a learned critic let us add, that, from the account which the Abbé de Sade gives of these translations, we are led to suppose that Leontius Pilatus never finished the Odyssey; whereas a perfect copy of these translations is preserved in the library of the Benedictines at Florence, as written by Pilatus, and copied afterwards by Nicolas Nili. The mistake therefore is this: Petrarch did not receive it from Pilatus himself, but from Boccacio; whom Petrarch beseeches, in the following words, to send him as quick as possible the remainder of the Odyssey---
*Postremo autem, ne amici volatilis (speaking of Pilatus who had left him) tam verbosa mentio frustra sit, redit hic in animum, te precari, ut Homericæ partem illam
 Odyssææ*

have the reputation of first circulating copies of the divine bard. Notwithstanding his po-

Odyssæ qua Ulysses it ad inferos, et locos qui in vestibulo Erebi sunt descriptionem ab Homero factam— ab hoc autem, de quo agimus—tuo hortatu in Latinum versam, mihi quam primum potes, admodum egenti, utcunque tuis digitis enarratam mittas. Hoc in presens: in futurum autem, si me amas, vide, obsecro, an tuo studio, meâ impensâ, fieri possit, ut Homerus integer bibliothecæ huic, ubi pridem Græcus habitat, tandem Latinus accedat.—Epist. V. Rer. Sen. lib. iii.—From Boccacio, much about the time of this visit, Petrarch received a copy of St. Augustin's Expositio in Psalmos, preserved in the king of France's library, in which is this memorandum in

Petrarch's Hand Writing:

*Thoc timentu op' dnavit m' uir egragi
dñs Jop'es Boccac' de certal' p' m
mit p'z 15. qdæ flor' yediolan' ad me
pu'it. 23º 66 ap' 27 1202*

De Re Diplomatica.

verty,

verty, and gay disposition, it is astonishing that he had either leisure or inclination to transcribe himself so many copies of the Greek and Roman writers, which, by passing through his hands, were purged from blunders and inaccuracies, and gained considerable refinement and purity.

While these learned men were exerting themselves in procuring manuscripts, and were rendering themselves immortal by their own productions, many bars were yet in the way of literature. One obstruction, which I consider to be the greatest, was the excessive dearness of parchment; and, as a proof, take the following anecdote: Petrarque habillé d'une simple veste de cuir passe, écrivoit sur elle les pensées qu'il craignoit de perdre, à proportion qu'elles se présentoient à son esprit. Cette veste pleine d'écriture, & couverte de ratures, étoit encore en 1527 conservée, & respectée comme

un

un monument précieux de littérature par Jacques Sadolet, Jean Casa, & Louis Bucatello, noms fameux dans la république des lettres : la vénération qu'on avoit pour les livres de St. Athanase faisoit dire à un Abbé qu'au défaut de papier, il falloit les écrire sur ses habits*.

Through the want of materials to write on, many manuscripts of the eighth, ninth, and following centuries, are still extant, wrote on parchment from which some former writing had been erased, in order to substitute a new composition in its place. And in this manner (says an intelligent historian) it is probable that several works of the ancients perished : a book of Livy, or of Tacitus, might be erased to make room for the legendary tale of a saint, or the superstitious prayers of a missal. This very easily accounts for the small number of manuscripts of the Grecian or Roman authors

* This reminds us of Hogarth, who would frequently sketch faces on his nails.

during

during those and succeeding ages.—The scarcity of books has been proved by many circumstances, since private persons seldom possessed any, and even monasteries of considerable note had only one missal*. To remedy

* The countess of Anjou purchased a copy of the Homilies of Haimon bishop of Halberstadt, by paying two hundred sheep, five quarters of millet, five of rye, and five of wheat.—*Histoire Littéraire de France*, tom. vii. p. 3.

In the library which Charles the Fifth founded in France, about the year 1376, among many books of devotion, astrology, chemistry, and romance, there was not one copy of Tully to be found, and no Latin poet but Ovid, Lucan, and Boethius; some French translations of Livy, Valerius Maximus, and St. Austin's City of God.—*Essay on Pope*, vol. ii. p. 11.

Le Prince Jean, duc de Berri, avoit hérité de son frere Charles V. un grand goût pour les livres. Il se forma une bibliotheque dont le catalogue contient environ cent volumes. Ce sont des Bibles, des Pseautiers, des Heures, des traductions de quelques traités particuliers des saints Peres, des Histoires anciennes, modernes, romanesques, &c. Il falloit des tresors pour faire

medy this misfortune, Petrarch, Boccacio, and Salutato earnestly solicited their friends to procure them copies whole or mutilated. Petrarch speaks of his library with raptures, calling it his treasure, his joy, and consolation. He had in his old age offered it to the state of Venice, where a building was prepared for it; but, being fickle and inconstant, he altered his mind, and gave part of it to Donato de Carantino, but in the greatest perfection, as some of his books were scattered abroad, and fell in-

faire une semblable collection. Le prix en est marqué dans ce catalogue; et on y trouve "des Bibles qui ont coûté, trois cent livres; un traité de la Cite de Dieu, deux cens livres; un Tite Live, cent trente-cinq livres:" et ainsi des autres. Les copistes avoient trouvé l'art d'embellir les livres de mille ornemens riches, et d'un travail fort recherché; ce qui les rendoit beaucoup plus chers & plus rares, parce que le tems qu'ils qu'ils mettoient à embellir leur ecriture, n'étoit pas employé à copier.—Anecdotes Françaises, p. 299.

to other hands. — The library of Boccacio was more fortunate in its possessors; since he left it by will to the Augustine Convent at Florence, where it has been carefully preserved. That of Salutato, which consisted of six hundred volumes, a prodigious collection for those times, was, at his death, sold in small lots by his children. — The palaces of princes, and religious houses, following the example of these learned men, were shortly after furnished with manuscripts. Robert, king of Naples, was the first who collected the works of the Greek and Roman writers; and the convents of the Cordeliers, Dominicans, and Augustines at Florence, were highly proud of their valuable literary acquisitions. The monks of Mount Cassino, so celebrated for their manuscripts in the 11th century, had, on the contrary, lost their taste for polite studies. Boccacio, who went to visit that library, with the hopes no doubt of discovering

covering something valuable, says that he was
 astonished to find the books torn, mouldy,
 trampled on the ground, and covered with filth;
 and that a monk told him it was owing to the
 ignorance and avarice of his brethren. How-
 ever difficult the access to Greek and Roman
 writers was in the time of Petrarch, yet by the
 assistance of Quintilian, imperfect as it was—of
 Virgil—and more particularly of Cicero, whom
 he mentions frequently as the source of all his
 information, Petrarch cultivated successfully a
 talent for Latin composition. His style can-
 not be supposed to be that of Tully or Livy;
 as it is often unnecessarily diffuse, sometimes
 cramp, and frequently confused by circumlo-
 cution, and bewildered by digression: yet there
 is a certain smoothness and polished volubility,
 which we look for in vain in works prior to
 his (excepting those of Mussato), and which
 seems to have thrown off the oppressive shackles
 of

of scholastic barbarism. His *Africa*, his *Eclogues*, and *Epistles*, inferior certainly to Virgil in beauty of expression and harmony of verse, are infinitely superior to all writers after the fifth century.—It would be a work of much labour, to compare with the writings of Petrarch the Latin authors of his age, and to point out every passage of his poems in which the style and expressions of Virgil have been judiciously or injudiciously copied; since it will be sufficient to say that, by his attentive reading of the purest Latin authors, and by his quick and vigorous imagination, he acquired a flow of words, and a method of arrangement, which gave him this evident superiority. It was, as before observed, entirely owing to this talent that he was presented in so conspicuous a manner with the laureate's crown; and so valuable did the study of the Latin language appear to the more enlightened part of mankind, that

the

the very corpse of Coluccio Salutato was publickly crowned by the Florentines. The abilities of Convevole del Prato^t, who was Petrarch's master at Avignon, of Maffato, of Bonato, of Zanobi del Strada^w, Lovato del Padua^x, and

^t He was a native of Prato in Tuscany. At Avignon he was Professor of Grammar for sixty years, but on his return to Prato was presented with the crown.

^w This Florentine poet was an intimate friend of Petrarch, who procured for him the place of Chief Justice of Naples. In the year 1355, the emperor Charles the Fourth, in a solemn assembly, crowned him with his own hands, and afterwards conducted him through every street of Pisa, with the laurel wreath on his head. Zanobi is said to have had the complexion and delicacy of a woman, joined to an extreme reserve and modesty. His conversation was agreeable, and his countenance always serene and smiling. His works are lost. He died of the plague in 1361.

^x He had written the laws of the twelve tables in verse, and several pieces, but his works are perished. He is by mistake called Donato by Petrarch and Fabricius.

Cardinal Stefaneschi⁷ gained them the same honor; but unfortunately we cannot judge of their merits, as most of their poems are either lost, or preserved only in manuscript, in the cabinets of the curious. Their names, and the accounts we have of them, are sufficient proofs that the study of Latin literature was firmly established in Italy during the time of Petrarch, who is universally allowed to have exerted himself most powerfully in the forsaken cause of literature.

⁷ He was created cardinal by Boniface the Eighth. He wrote three short Latin poems on the abdication of Celestin V. and the creation of Boniface. He died at Avignon, 1343.

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